**Preparing for the Return Series**

**“Encourage One Another”**

**Hebrews 10.25b**

**Introduction**

Today we come to the last sermon in our current series, “Preparing for the Return.” In this series we are considering five ways the writer of Hebrews tells us to prepare for the second coming of Christ. We were first exhorted to draw near to God, then to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, then to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Last week we looked at the exhortation to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. And today we will consider the last exhortation to encourage one another all the more as we see the day drawing near.

Our text for this series is Hebrew chapter ten verses nineteen through twenty-five.

Hear now the Word of God:

***19****Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,****20****by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,****21****and since we have a great priest over the house of God,****22****let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.****23****Let us hold fast the*

*confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;****24****and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,****25****not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

**Encouraging One Another**

Our focus this morning will be on the exhortation *encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.* It seems that the entire passage is one big word of encouragement. It seems that the Holy Spirit is pouring courage into the inspired writer to speak words of encouragement to his readers. He has encouraged them to draw near, to hold fast, to consider, and to assemble. And now he wants his readers to follow his example and encourage one another.

Biblical encouragement is more than a suggestion like, “I want to encourage you to take a class in English grammar before trying to learn a new language.” Biblical encouragement is more than a complement like, “I want to encourage you to make your pumpkin soup every Thanksgiving.” Biblical encouragement has a spiritual dimension that goes beyond suggestions and compliments. Biblical encouragement is to speak God’s Word into a person’s life so that they would follow the Lord.

You can see biblical encouragement in our text. The original readers of the book of Hebrews were starting to drift away from Christ’s finished work of atonement so the inspired writer encourages them to draw near with full assurance of faith. The original readers were beginning to waver in their confession of hope in Christ so the inspired writer encourages them to hold fast to Christ. The original readers were becoming lax to love and good deeds so the inspired writes encourages them to consider how to stimulate one another. The original readers were forsaking the assembling together so the inspired writer encourages them to not follow the habit of some. The inspired writer sums up the entire passage by passing the encouragement baton to his readers encouraging them to encourage one another just like he has been encouraging them.

You see a brother or sister drifting away from Christ you should encourage them to draw near with full assurance. This is you Christian duty. You see a brother or sister beginning to waver in their confession of hope you should encourage them to hold fast to Him who is faithful. This is your Christian obligation. You see a brother or sister becoming lax to love and good deeds you should encourage them to repent and do the deeds they did first. This is you Christian responsibility. You see a brother or sister forsaking the church you should encourage them to reengage in the life of the church. This is your role as a Christian. Christians encourage one another all the more as they see the day drawing near.

The inspired writer wrote earlier in the book, “*But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”* (Heb.3.13) Here we see that biblical encouragement is not just a Sunday thing it is a *day after day* thing. And how long will we need to be encouraging one another? *As long as it is still called “Today.”* I love that because sometimes you can become weary in well doing, especially when those you are encouraging aren’t responding in positive way. In times like that you are tempted to knock the dust off your feet and move on. But the inspired writer reminds us to *encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today.”* Encouraging one another is an ongoing ministry of the Church. It doesn’t fade out. It is never replaced by something more trending or spectacular. Encouraging one another is a core ministry of the Church. Why? We are all susceptible to become harden by the deceitfulness of sin.

*But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* Sin is a deceptive agent seeking to lead believers astray. Sin does not work independently but rather lures and entices our own lusts to exchange the truth of God for a lie. (Js.1.14) Sin masquerades itself as something attractive, desirable, smart, and clever but in reality it is ugly, vile, stupid, and foolish. Do I need to give you examples of what I’m referring to or do you understand? We begin to be lured and enticed by the deceitfulness of sin and find ourselves drifting away from Christ, His Word, and His Church.

Sin enters the heart and begins to harden the spiritual arteries by blocking off the truth of God’s Word. Without some intervention we will fall away from the living God. But the Lord is faithful to provide intervention by His Spirit speaking God’s Word to our hearts though brothers and sisters in Christ coming to encourage us to believe in Christ and not to give in to the deceitfulness of sin.

Encouraging one another is not a recommendation. The Apostle Paul writes, “*you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”* As an earthly father I have spent hours exhorting, encouraging, and imploring my boys to do the right thing and to live a godly and upright life. What Paul is saying is that this type of fatherly exhortation is what biblical encouragement is all about. Jude writes, “*save others, snatching them out of the fire*.” (Jd.1.23a) That’s biblical encouragement. We are called to be God’s first responders to brothers and sisters in need of encouragement. The Bible tells us that Paul and Barnabas strengthen the souls of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith. (Acts14.22) And we have the opportunity to strengthen the souls of the disciples in this church by encouraging them in their faith!

**Barnabas – Son of Encouragement**

The Scripture does give us an example of someone whose life exemplified an encourager. The book of Acts introduces us to man named Joseph but was also called Barnabas by the apostles, which translated means “Son of Encouragement.” The book of Acts tells us, “*Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement).”* (Acts 4.36) The Bible does not give us any details of why the apostles gave Joseph this nickname, which leaves us to conclude it was because of his outstanding reputation as an encourager. But as you continue to read the book of Acts, you can pick up on a few reasons why this man was given the name Barnabas – Son of Encouragement.

First, we are told that Barnabas sold a tract of land and gave the proceeds to the church for the advancement of its mission and ministry in the early years. (Acts 4.37) Barnabas saw the opportunity to be an encourager to others through his financial support of the church and its ministries. The next time we see Barnabas is after the conversion of Saul (Paul). Prior to Paul’s conversion to Christ he had violently persecuted Christians entering house after house, dragging off men and women, and throwing them into prison for their faith in Christ. (Acts 8.3, 9.1-2) But now Paul had become a Christian himself and wanted to associate with all of the disciples in Jerusalem. But of no surprise they were all afraid of him and didn’t believe that he was really a disciple of Christ. (Acts 9.26) Only Barnabas was willing to go to Paul and bring him to the apostles describing to them Paul’s dramatic conversation. (Acts 9.27) Barnabas’ encouragement was the launching pad for Paul’s ministry in Jerusalem and beyond. (Acts 9.28-31)

Later on the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached the non-Jewish world in northern Syria and a large numbers of Greeks came to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. (Acts 11.19-21) The Apostle back in Jerusalem heard news about these new non-Jewish converts and they decided to send the Barnabas, the son of encouragement, to disciple them. (Acts 11.22)

This is what is recorded about Barnabas’ ministry to these new converts. *Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.* (Acts 11.23-24) This passage not only gives us a detail description of Barnabas’ character telling us that *he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.* But it also tells us the primary method of Barnabas’ ministry was to *encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.* That’s biblical encouragement. And the result of Barnabas’ ministry of encouragement was that *considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.*

But Barnabas knew he could not disciple all of these new converts alone so he traveled to Tarsus to find Paul. Barnabas encouraged Paul to come back with him to Antioch and assist him in teaching theses new converts the Word of God. And for the next year Barnabas and Paul met with the church teaching them God’s Word and encouraging them in Christ and as a result the church of Antioch was the first place disciples were called Christians. (Acts 11.25-26)

What can we learn from these examples from the Son of Encouragement? First, an encourager willingly invests into the Body of Christ with time, talents, and treasures. Second, an encourager looks pass a person’s past and sees their potential for the future. Third, an encourager doesn’t see culture differences as a barrier for ministry. Fourth, an encourager has divine determination to see people follow Christ. Fifth, an encourager seeks to partner with others for the advancement of the Gospel.

**Be An Encourager**

Please remember that our text this morning is not just for a select few Christians. It is an exhortation for every believer. “*But encourage one another*.” The fact is that the Lord has put certain people in your life so that you would be a Barnabas to them. Right now you know someone who is struggling spiritually and you could be an encourager to them. Right now you know someone who is young and immature in their faith who needs an older believer to mentor them in Christ. And you could be that person for them. Right now you have resources that you know could be used for ministry in the church and you could be an encouragement to many through your gracious gift. Right now you know someone who needs to take the next step in their commitment to Christ and you could be the one to encourage them. The question is, “Are you going to be an encourager?” The question is, “Are you going to take this exhortation to encourage one another seriously?” Yes! Let’s be encouragers to *one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today.”*

Maybe your spirit is willing to be an encourager to others but you need some encouragement to get started. So let me offer a few ideas to help you get started.

1. Pray that God would make you an encourager. Ask Him to give you a heart that loves others and the courage to show it.
2. Pray for God to show you whom to encourage. And I would encourage men to encourage men and women to encourage women.
3. Make encouraging others a daily commitment. Remember the Scripture says, “*day after day*.” So make a commitment that you are going to encourage someone in Christ every day. Maybe its one person every day. Or maybe it is a new person every day. But every day you are going to call, FaceTime, email, text, or go Old School and write a note and put it in the mail.
4. Use Scripture if you are able.
5. *Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.* (Col.4.6)
6. Ask the Lord to open your heart so to receive the truth in love and accept encouragement from others.

**Closing Thoughts**

As I close out this series I want to remind you that the idea behind this series came from several people asking if I thought that there is a connection between COVID-19 and the end times. As I mentioned before I don’t see a direct connection with COVID-19 and the second coming of Christ outside of the fact disasters and disease are a result of a fallen world that exists in a state of corruption destined to decay.

In this series we have focused our attention on preparing ourselves for the return of Christ. Preparing for the return of Christ is a spiritual matter that every generation of believers should take serious. As I mentioned before I believe that “coronavirus is God’s thunderclap call to all of us to repent and realign our lives with the infinite worth of Christ.” (John Piper)

But after going through this series of sermons I believe that COVID-19 is an opportunity for us to also repent and realign our commitment to Christ’s Church and to this congregation. How divinely dynamic would it be if this church became stronger, more spiritually engaged with one another, and grow during a time when we are separated because of a worldwide pandemic? That would be a miracle that could only be explained by the power of God. So, I am asking that you will join me in prayer that God would create a culture of encouragement in this church so that we would show tangible expressions of encouragement to one another day by day, as long as it is called “Today.”