

The Spiritual Lift
Hebrews 10:23-25

August 27, 2017

23 Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,

25 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.

Today's Scripture is a perfect lesson for those that are absent from worship. It says "let us not neglect to meet together as is the habit of some." Once again the Bible shows us that one of the problems that we have in society today is also a problem that they had back then. Some people make it a habit to not come to worship together. The Bible remains current because the problems that the Bible addresses are problems of humanity.

I remember back in my childhood when I went to church they gave out attendance pins. Some of my friends would strive to get those attendance pins. It was their goal. It motivated them to come to church. I confess that back then when I was at a young age I really didn't care. It didn't matter to me if I got a pin or missed a service.

After I became adult and got active in church leadership (sometime around the age thirty or so) I thought about those attendance pins. The more I reflect upon it, the more I realize that it is not a good way to motivate people. Christian attendance in Sunday school and worship is not motivated by the desire to get a pin. The only thing the pin does is it feeds pride. Our desire to worship God as a congregation comes from something else altogether. Today's message is about that something else. I will identify it as the spiritual lift. Our desire to worship comes from the spiritual lift.

I will talk for a minute or two about missing church. I don't like to call it "missing church." Though church is the people and I do miss the people whenever I am absent. But when I am absent what I am really missing is worship. Now I believe that the worship of God can take place in virtually any setting. But when I am absent what is missed is worshiping God at the altar, in the temple, in God's house. I miss worshiping God together with you as a congregation. When I miss worshiping God in congregation, I miss the opportunity to help others, to express Christian love, compassion, good deeds, and offer encouragement. When I miss worshiping God with the congregation I fail to serve the people that God loves. I also miss the opportunity for others help me. In so doing, I end up denying them their blessing.

When we go on vacation we usually make an effort to attend worship. I confess that sometimes I will miss a worship service. Things happen inside of me when I miss. I feel different in a way that's hard to describe. It's like I am running on empty physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I feel weaker. It seems like something is missing from my life leaving me to feel somewhat unsatisfied. I feel better physically, emotionally, and spiritually whenever I have experienced worship. And I also feel better on the days following worship participation. That is a direct result of the spiritual lift.

When I am absent there is a list of things that I miss. I miss the warm smiles. I miss the hugs. I miss the handshakes. I miss the conversations with friends. I miss walking together in our faith journey (comradery). I miss listening to the hymns we sing. I miss the fellowship with God. I miss the Bible-based lessons. I miss the Christian love, compassion, good deeds, and encouragement. I miss the spiritual lift.

Recently I went to a fast food restaurant and it seemed to me that the manager must have been absent. The staff showed more interest in each other than in me as a customer. The tables were not clean. The soft drink station was not maintained, they were out of several selections. And it took a long time for me to get the food. It was sitting in the ready bin unnoticed as the staff were distracted talking to one another. I assumed that the manager must have been absent. There are some places that you go to and it is obvious that they do not care. Attitudes of apathy engulf the environment to the point of being obvious. And there are some places that you go to and it is obvious that they do care about you as a customer. Attitudes of professionalism, care, or due diligence, can also engulf the environment to the point of being obvious.

When God is a part of your life there is this spiritual manifestation within you. There is a powerful force that can transform your life. There is a power within you with a dimension that is limitless. You can take this power and apply it in your physical world to where it engulfs the environment. Jesus had an idea that is expressed in John 14:12 "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (NRSV). The believer will be able to do what Jesus has done. That is missions, teaching, what seems like miracles. Things that may seem impossible you can do through the spiritual lift. Jesus' idea is that you have the power within you to do divine things. That's because of the divine spiritual influence that manifests within you.

There is a level of living that goes beyond being accidental, beyond surviving, beyond living your life from day to day. With the spiritual lift positive things start showing up in your life. We tend to live our lives by putting attention on ourselves. We worry about our finances, our jobs, the opinions of others, and stuff like that. But when you put your attention on the divine, with trust, faith, and confidence, positive changes happen in your life. When you put your attention on the divine you get to enjoy living in a life of abundance. The theology of abundance is a lifestyle. You live the life of a changed person, a spirit filled person, one that is trusting in God. There is no rush, no hurry, no fear of losing, or being without. You know that things can, will, and do, mysteriously come together for the good. And as good things mysteriously happen around you, your happiness compounds. Personally I think one key to making all of this work is daily devotions. I recommend prioritizing your life to put the most important things first and block out time everyday for what is most important – your relationship with the divine. As a side note, the able bodied people that do not come to worship have a detached relationship with God but they don't realize it and think it's OK. They do what they want to do, neglect to meet together, and without realizing it they miss the spiritual lift.

When you have this direct experience, this encounter with the divine, then there is no doubt, positive reaffirmations occur in your life. When you live the spirit filled life then there is power within you that erases fear, doubt, and uncertainty. When the spiritual lift is within you it empowers you, it changes your life to where you are happier, healthier, unselfish, peaceful, and a healer (if you make a list of positive affirmations one of them is a healer). You are a healer.

Live your life according to a divine first lifestyle. Practice your daily devotions and you will see a difference in your life as your spiritual self is aligned with the divine. The power of the divine is manifested within you as you have a connection with God which is made available through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our Lord and Savior, the very Son of God, gives us the spiritual lift that we need in life.