
Ignite

"Dear Lord, we are grateful to belong to this church called DUMC. We thank You for this community that desires to love You, serve people and make disciples for You and Your kingdom. We pray that as a community we will continue to be passionate for what matters to You, to help the least and to bring the Good news to the lost. May we serve You Lord as a community that submits to Your leading. AMEN."



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Jesus: A Better Community

Pastor Mike Ngui

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Introduction

The book of Hebrews was written to Christians of Jewish background. They were being pressured and tempted to set aside the work of Jesus Christ and to return to Judaism practices such as the observances of temple ceremonies and Jewish laws. However, the author exhorted and encouraged them to focus on Jesus because He is better, greater and His work is infinitely more effective and efficacious. The author addresses Jesus’ followers to respond to these great truths by living together as a better community called the Body of Christ or the Church. **But how is this community, inaugurated by Jesus, better?** It is better because it is permanent, eternal and available to all. The Church’s destiny and destination is already secured by Christ’s death and resurrection. It is better because everyone has access to the Father through Jesus Christ and everything that is needed to live a full life has

already been given – a renewed inward nature, a heart of flesh with a desire to love God and obey Him and the power of God's spirit living within us.

What does this community look like? The moral ethical baseline of this community is righteousness and not expediency. This community lives for what is right and good, not for what is convenient and easy. It is a community where everyone has equal access to God. It expresses itself in seeking out God's presence regularly as a corporate body - coming together in worship and exalting one another to do similarly in our personal lives.

BIG IDEA: The church is the Better Community. Live it to know it!

The goal is not to merely state this truth but instead to live it out in order that these theological realities become lived realities. There are 3 exhortations:

1. Come to God Confidently *Hebrews 10:19-22*

The Community of Jesus Christ is called to draw near and to confidently come to God since we now have direct access to the Father.

a. The basis of our confidence *Hebrews 10:19-22*

Direct access to God is always available to us because we have been made holy by the **shedding of His blood** (*Hebrews 10:19; Ephesians 2:13*) and the **sacrifice of His body** (*Hebrews 20:20*). Before Jesus, only the high priest could enter the most Holy place and only on certain days and under certain conditions. But now, those who have been cleansed by Jesus' blood have received the freedom to enter God's presence continually. Furthermore, the curtain in the Tabernacle was torn apart when Jesus gave up his last breath on the cross. This is a physical symbolic reminder that we now have unrestricted access to God's presence all the time.

Our confidence is also based on the **standing of Jesus' priesthood** (*Hebrews 10:21; 4:14*). Our priest Jesus is not only the better and superior High Priest but also the perfect one. He stands perfectly before God on our behalf. He has prepared the way for us to enter God's presence and continues to apply the efficacy of His sacrifice to us.

b. The crux of our confidence *Hebrews 10:22*

We can now come to God without hesitation, knowing that what Jesus did at the cross cleanses us from the filth and guilt of sin. Sincere confession and determined repentance are important in the life of a Christian, but more importantly we are called to believe wholeheartedly what Jesus has already done and accomplished for us.

Pastor Eugene Peterson paraphrases Hebrews 20:20 this way: *“So let’s do it – full of belief, confident that we’re presentable inside and out”*.

2. Hold on to God tightly *Hebrews 10:23*

a. The hope we profess *Hebrews 10:23a*

Christian hope is one of certainty even when surrounded by most adverse circumstances staring us in the face. It is hope in our future eternal salvation, our complete forgiveness by God and our complete transformation to be like Jesus - fully human as God intends for all humanity. It is the hope of life in eternity in the most complete and fulfilling way where we will fully know the love of our God for us.

b. God who promised is faithful *Hebrews 10:23b, 11:6*

Faith is not first and foremost about the trustworthiness of God’s promises but about the trustworthiness of God himself just as Abraham trusted that God would honor His word even as God tells him to kill Isaac – the fulfillment of God’s promise to him for having descendants. God is always faithful, and He keeps up His end of the bargain. We are called to have faith in the character of God for it pleases Him.

3. Reach out to each other in love *Hebrews 10:24-25*

The danger that the author is addressing to the Hebrew Christians in the first century is still prevalent today where pressures and persecutions of our days threaten our loyalty to Jesus. When this happens, we need each other to stir one another to love God. We need to find ways to help each other come back to God in confidence and to hold on to God tightly.

a. By our words *Ephesians 4:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Words have the power of life, just as it has the power of death. Genuine words of encouragement and forgiveness breathes life into our communities. Our words should be an encouragement to other believers. Let everything we say be good and helpful so that it will be a good encouragement to others and build each other up.

b. By our acts *Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12*

We are called to be kind and compassionate to each other, to be more Christ-like. They are marks of a better community that Jesus has established. The New Testament emphasizes that acts of kindness and compassion be first shown within the church as these acts inspire others within and outside of the Christian community.

c. By our presence

We are to consider how we can spur one another on towards love and good deeds, **not giving up meeting together**. If we are not present for each other, we miss the best opportunities to encourage one another. Our presence matters, even in the online setting, where being able to hear and see each other is an expression of presence. So, in our next zoom meeting, let us turn on our camera and audio to talk, listen and encourage each other!

Conclusion

The church is the Better Community. We need to live it and living it involves coming to God confidently and holding on to Him tightly and reaching out to each other in love. We, as a church, must use the opportunities we have to reach out to each other in love and help each other hold on to God tightly so we can journey through life as God's tribe, sharing the benefits of what Jesus has accomplished for us with each other.



SERMON REFLECTION

[Journal entry 27th September 2021]

Thank you Lord for this week's sermon along with the precious lesson you provided at the quiet lakefront in Putrajaya. How can I ever begin to thank you? I was beginning to feel my enthusiasm for life slowly but surely being snuffed out, while I descended into despair and hopelessness. It had been 18 months, 8 days and 2 hours since COVID became real to us and since then, life for me has become a cycle of never-ending routine of preparing kids for breakfast and online classes, of attending to work emails, meetings, and deadlines, of getting the kids bedtime ready and only to attend some more meetings after. I wake up every morning dreading this repetitive cycle day after day, week after week and month after month. I know it is

normal for life to have its ups and downs but how long more, O God? How long more do we need to be in the trenches with no better days in sight? When, O God, will this ever end?

The kids are feeling the effects of being cooped up at home bored, evident from their constant annoying bickering. It is as if oxygen was cut off from them and at the point where they are gasping for air, they desperately “inhale” what they can of the world through poor representations in the form of television and weekend car ride window watching. It is so sad to see them wasting away their childhood wondering what the real world feels like without ever really knowing...When, O God, will this ever end?

Thank you for the lesson you taught me through this weekend's kite flying experience at Putrajaya. I realize now that the reason the kite could not fly was not due to the lack of strong winds nor was it because it was damaged. Weather conditions were perfect, location was spot on with ample open space to launch the kite and the line was sufficiently released to fly, but the kite simply caught the wind and sagged at the tail despite many attempts to get it off the ground. Thank you for giving me the wisdom to realize that some supporting rods were needed to hold the wind channel rigid. I was asked by my wife if adding more dead weight would help but I now know that You were that still small voice in my heart of hearts convincing me to carry on when I simply answered her, *“Let’s just try this out”*.



I realize you were showing me that, like the kite, **humans need two things to thrive in this broken world – Faith and Community.** You know Lord that I try to spend some quiet time with You and I sincerely study Scripture to store up Your promises in my heart. But it can be hard at times to continue believing and to have hope that all things, even the perceived bad, are for the good of all who love You. **I now know that the missing element was Community.** I have always felt reluctant to share with other brothers and sisters about my difficulties and even more reluctant to ask for help. I rationalize that I do not wish to be a burden to others and tell myself people already have enough of their own problems. Furthermore, I can't help but feel You looking disapprovingly at me for not wholeheartedly trusting You.

But You know better. You showed me that these were all excuses and that truth be told, I was creating an emotional barrier to “church people” for fear of being hurt again. Thank you for teaching me that I should look beyond the people and instead reference Jesus as the center of it all. Christians are not perfect and like chocolates, come in many shapes and sizes. But through the inward workings of the Holy Spirit, we are united in a common goal of one day becoming the perfect representation of Christ. I am also comforted that my insecure faith is not so much a reflection of my failing as a Christian but rather God ordained opportunities for others to show love and kindness as we support each other and spur each other on towards love and good deeds.

Thank You Jesus, for being real to me and for giving a fresh revelation during this low point of my life. I woke up comforted this morning knowing come what may, You hold the lines of my kite in Your loving and all powerful hands. Like the kite, I will continue to soar in the sky and be guided by Your ever-present grace that is renewed every morning. Amen.

Contributed by Darren Lim



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- Virtual vs in-person CGs: How has your experience been so far? Which do you prefer and why?
- What is your favourite Zoom virtual background setting? (*Why a certain background even if none?*)

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- Suggest some fun and creative ways to show care during this prolonged period of restricted physical contact.
- Share the first adjective that comes to mind when you think of 'Community' (e.g. *good, bad, exciting, fun, painful, scary, etc.*). Share the reason(s) you chose that adjective.
- What does community mean to you? Do you think it is important to belong to a community?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- Knowing that we can now confidently come to God at any time, place and form, how does this change the way you seek Him? Share some practical ways that you can do today, tomorrow or this week to seek Him more.
- What new perspective have you gathered from Hebrews about Community? How would this now change the way you support and treat others, even those who may be difficult or different?
- How are we (as an individual and as a CG) living out the exhortation in Hebrews 10:24-25 to "*spur each other in love and good deeds*"? (*Note to facilitator: This can be a good point to perhaps pray for someone God has impressed upon our hearts to support and encourage or to solicit ideas around what the CG feels they can do more to support the community e.g. ImpactNow.*)
- Christian hope is one of certainty even when surrounded by the most adverse circumstances. How can we continue to faithfully persevere in such circumstances?
- Our presence in the online setting matters and being able to hear and see each other is an expression of presence. Are there things we can immediately do or do more of to show support and kindness in the online setting?

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being very little and 10 very frequent), how often do you seek God daily? What would you do to bump it up?
 - In Daniel 3: 8-25: Daniel's friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abdenego) were able to trust God "even if [God] does not [deliver them]". How can we build the same unwavering faith and trust in God?
 - There are good communities and there are Christian communities. Is there a difference? Discuss.
 - What do you think Oswald Chambers meant by "Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love"?
 - Walter Payton quotes: "*We are stronger together than we are alone*". How is this still relevant in the society of this day and age?
 - "The church is the better community but not the perfect community yet that is its goal": How can we support such a form of Community living considering disagreements, conflicts, and differences within the body of Christ?
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PRAYER



Photo by Jeremy Yap on Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Nepal

Pray for:

- God to open the eyes of those blind to the truth and shine His Light into their darkness.
- God to save those who have lost all hope and reason to live.

- Pastors/Leaders to preach and practise the true Word of God, and know what is right and pleasing to the Lord and what is of this world, leading to a deep meaningful relationship with the Lord.
- For people to enjoy freedom of belief and of conversion. Pray against persecution and witchcraft.

Agnes - Missionary in Nepal

Pray for Agnes:

- Wisdom to disciple the local church and pastors/leaders.
- She will not miss any opportunity to reach out to those God brings to her.
- For her to do well in her Bachelor's studies and to reach out to her past and present lecturers and classmates.



OTHER RESOURCES

*Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!*

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



Helping without Hurting in Short-Term Missi...

8 sessions (20-30 minutes average)

rightnowmedia.org

This stand-alone resource applies the principles of "helpin...

Brian Fikkert

Mission Social Concerns

Video Series



Discipleship Bands

1 hour a week for the duration of the discipleship group

discipleshipbands.com

A framework for discipleship groups for 3-5 people based...

J.D. Walt

Fellowship Prayer & Spirituality

Tool App



Gospel Comes with a House Key, The

13 videos (3 minute clips on average)

rightnowmedia.org

Rosaria Butterfield invites us into her home to show us ho...

Rosaria Butterfield

Fellowship Friendship Hospitality

Video Series Book Study



Knowing God (Video Series)

3 videos (8 minutes average)

youtube.com

The leader must know God and walk with God in a daily, ...

Malcolm Webber

Leadership Prayer & Spirituality

Video Series



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

