

January 15, 2023

“Vision - A Covenant Family” Hebrews 10:24-25

FCF: The call to be a covenant family

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because of the new dynamic (and distinctive characteristics) of the church, (magnet) we must consider things regarding one another.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

“Dead Poets Society” – the story of a controversial English teacher, John Keating (played by Robin Williams), who shakes up a New England prep school for boys in the 1950’s. One day, Keating presses his students to “feel” the poetry and reads from Walt Whitman (**READ quote**):

O me!...of the questions of these recurring;
Of the endless trains of the faithless – of cities filled with the foolish;
What good amid these, O me, O life?
Answer: That you are here – that life exists, and identity;
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

Keating repeats, “That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.” Then he pauses, looks at his students, and asks, “And what will your verse be?” It’s a good question.

It’s a question we need to ask. What will our verse be? This is the first in a series on a new Vision Statement for our church – composed by our Vision Team and approved by the elders - the fruit of countless hours of prayer, study, and conversation over the course of many months.

This is the short summary sentence at the top the statement. It’s worth starting there (**READ**): “Christ Presbyterian Church exists for the glory of God and the joy of all people.”

Just below that, there is a summary paragraph, rolling out what this means (**READ**):

We are a **COVENANT FAMILY**
Being **TRANSFORMED** to the likeness of Christ
Rejoicing in and **DISPLAYING** His truth, goodness, and grace
Growing in love, service, and relationship to God and our **COMMUNITY**
For the **GLORY** of God and His kingdom, present and eternal

Each word in that section in bold is then explained in further detail in a paragraph below. This morning, we are going to start by exploring the first line, “We are a covenant family” (**READ**):

A covenant is a sealed promise of God to His people throughout scripture with accompanying promises. As a body of believers in Christ’s complete work, we are adopted heirs to the promises God has given His people. We solemnly covenant to build Christ’s kingdom together. This cannot happen without continual sacrificial, prayerful, and intentional time together.

From there, this particular paragraph is unpacked further so as to flesh out the intent (**READ**):

We will remember all that God has done, is doing, and will continue to do.
We will meet together in our homes and share meals together.
We will pray for one another.
We will sit together in grief and celebrate together in triumph.
We will reconcile all our relationships because God has reconciled us.
We will show up and be Christ’s body on Earth as He has called us to do.
We will live generously and give to one another of our time, talents, resources, and experience.
We will worship together.

This is our vision. How is this seen in the Scriptures? What does the Lord say to us about this?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

A local church is a group of folks with a new dynamic creating distinctive characteristics. What do I mean by that? A new dynamic - something different now fuels us. There’s something unique at our core, something about what we’re about that sets us apart. It’s a fusion reaction, burning with a new energy. We are no longer what we once were or like the world around us.

There is a new dynamic. How do we see that in our text? In two ways (**READ Hebrews 10:19-21**). First, we have confidence to come to God through “a new and living way,” through Jesus. Second, with that confidence, we have “a great priest.” Jesus, the One who opened the way for us, is ushering us into God’s presence. Something has changed. There is new dynamic.

And that new dynamic creates some distinctive characteristics - a threefold response like a three-legged stool or a three-stranded fabric. In faith (v.22), we draw near to God. In hope (v.23), we hold fast to truth. And in love (vv.24-25), we consider things regarding one another. All three are traced back to this new dynamic, this fusion reaction, this new core burning within.

We’re focusing on the third of these today (**READ Hebrews 10:24-25**). What is it to “consider” things regarding one another? The word means to notice, to look closely or intently. It’s to ponder and reflect on something. It’s what we do when faced with a problem to solve or an issue to work through. It means intentional attentive focus. That’s what is spoken of here.

Tying this together, we have this new core, a new dynamic that creates these distinctive characteristics. Part of that means we are to consider and focus on things regarding one another.

Which, of course, begs some questions. What are we to consider? And how are we to do it? Put another way, what is our goal in this? And, with that, what are the means towards it?

I. OUR GOAL – WHAT WE ARE TO DO

So, first, what are we to consider? What is our goal? In our relationships with one another, what are we told to do? To what are we to be striving? (**READ Hebrews 10:24**)

A) To Stir Up One Another

We are to “consider,” to focus, to commit ourselves, to “stirring up” one another.

1. What it means

That is, we are to incite, to provoke, to stimulate one another. Others should experience this because of our presence in their lives – our example and our counsel causing something to occur.

2. Why it’s needed

Why? Why would we be called to stir up one another? Well, what sorts of things need to be stirred up? Things sitting still, that aren’t moving. We need each other that we might be moved.

B) To Love and Good Works

But moved towards what? We see that here as well – “to love and good works.”

1. To love

To “agape” – to selfless concern and interest for one another, to costly affection and good will towards each other. A love which Jesus has so clearly poured out and spoken towards us.

2. To good works

Which must go beyond mere sentimental feelings to sacrificial actions – to “good works.”

We are called to “stir up one another” to these things – “to love and good works.”

Application:

And it is this we are to “consider,” that we are to focus upon and give ourselves towards. It is towards this the author of Hebrews is saying we should think and plan and move with intentionality and purpose. To look at one another with this in mind, saying to ourselves, “*This person is, like me, a member of the body of Christ. How can I incite love in them? What do I need to model and encourage that they might be provoked, stirred up, to good works?*”

That’s why we’re here. No, we are not to be judgmental meddling busybodies. But we are to live as what we are - brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, in the faith who take a lively interest in one another’s lives. None of us are islands. We are our brother’s keeper.

So, as a church, we have this new dynamic at work within us. And because of that, we must then strive to “consider” one another such that we take seriously our impact on one another.

II. THE MEANS – HOW WE ARE TO DO IT

That is our goal – what we are to do. But what of the means? How are we to do this, to strive and struggle towards this goal? We see that here as well (**READ Hebrews 10:24-25**).

A) Not Neglecting to Meet Together

Negatively, we reach that worthy goal by not neglecting to meet together.

1. What it means

And the implication of what is said is that some had indeed fallen into this. They had been enmeshed in the life of the community but were now adrift, comfortable and complacent.

2. Why it happens

And it’s not hard to see how this happens. Other things, maybe even good things, crowd out the better things. Priorities get shifted, decisions are made, and commitments change. And comfort and complacency towards community life – a shared life together – settle in. Which is why some of us are feeling a bit uncomfortable even now with this renewed challenge and emphasis.

B) But Encouraging One Another

But our stirring one another up towards love and good works will never be reached if we neglect to meet together. It simply won’t happen. And so we are told to encourage one another.

1. What it means

That is, to speak the promises of God to one another. To tell the stories of His work in our lives. To come alongside and pray with and for each other in earnest that our faith to draw near to Him might grow and that our hope and resolve would become strong. It’s our doing life together.

2. Why it’s needed

Doing so “all the more as (we) see the Day drawing near.” This is the Day of Christ’s return. We live and labor together with that in view, knowing that change and restoration is coming.

We need this. We need this. We’re kidding ourselves, hurting and hampering ourselves and one another if we think otherwise. Hurting and hampering ourselves and one another.

Illustration:

I know it's January but let me take you to the Summer 2000 Olympic Games. Long before we ever heard of Michael Phelps, there was Eric Moussambani ([READ IV2 Viewer](#)):

Eric "The Swimmer" Moussambani of Equatorial Guinea was an unlikely hero of the Sydney Olympic Games. The 22-year-old African had only learned to swim (that) January, had only practiced in a 20-meter pool without lane markers, and had never raced more than 50 meters. By special invitation of the International Olympic Committee, under a special program that permits poorer countries to participate even though their athletes don't meet customary standards, he had been entered in the 100-meter men's freestyle.

When the other two swimmers in his heat were disqualified because of false starts, Moussambani was forced to swim alone. Eric Moussambani was, to use the words of an Associated Press story about his race, "charmingly inept." He never put his head under the water's surface and flailed wildly to stay afloat. With ten meters left to the wall, he virtually came to a stop. Some spectators thought he might drown! Even though his time was over a minute slower than what qualified for the next level of competition, the capacity crowd at the Olympic Aquatic Center stood to their feet and cheered the swimmer on.

After what seemed like an eternity, the African reached the wall and hung on for dear life. When he had caught his breath and regained his composure, the French-speaking Moussambani said through an interpreter, "I want to send hugs and kisses to the crowd. It was their cheering that kept me going."

That's what we see here in our text – the encouragement of one another that keeps us going.

Application:

This is what we are to "consider." Please hear me. Sunday morning worship is necessary but not sufficient. This is not enough. Sneaking in and out of here each week is not enough. Hanging around for a few minutes is not enough. There is something reciprocal here, something interpersonal, something that clearly demands smaller gatherings – something along the lines of what goes on with our Women's and Men's ministries but especially our community groups. There we have the opportunity to learn to be in the Word together, to pray and be prayed for together, to share and do life together – which we cannot do any other way but by being together.

We have this new dynamic at work within us. And because of that, the Scripture teaches we must then strive to "consider" one another, committing to meet and spend time together.

CONCLUSION:

It's an odd image but worth remembering. We human beings are like porcupines huddled together in a storm – needing but needling each other all the while. Absolutely. It's the doctrine of Creation and the Fall applied to relationships. Perhaps the porcupine should be our mascot.

That said, we are also like coals. The story is told of the pastor who went to visit an oft-absent member on a wintry day. Once inside, the pastor said nothing but walked to the fire, took the tongs, pulled one of the coals out and set it aside. It soon grew cold and went out. It was a silent but fiery sermon. The point being we need the warmth of others lest our faith and hope grow cold. But there is another side to it. They need yours as well. It's not just that one coal that grows cold when taken out of the larger whole. The larger whole grows cooler without that one coal. Think about how less warmth this church has because some remain at a distance.

The need for all this is real because the struggle is real. This is not some tale told to keep or get any of us in line. The battle is real. Loneliness is real. Our need is real. And so too is this invitation from the Lord. And that is why this has to be integral to our new vision statement.

We have this new dynamic. We really have this access to God. We really have this great priest. So let us draw near. Let us hold fast. And let us consider these things of one another.

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