

Welcome: Good morning friends and welcome to Foothills Church. My name is Dillon and I am one of the pastors here. It feels really good to be back in church this morning. I've missed the last four Sundays. Two for family vacation and two were on mission in Spain with our young adults. We got back last Sunday night. It was a great missions trip and experience. I'm not going to share too much because we are planning a whole Sunday service in a few weeks to get reports from each of our teams, but I will say this. My favorite part of the trip was watching our young adults loving and ministering to Spanish kids in a summer camp/English camp experience. They were amazing. The first day of camp was crazy and it was so fun to watch our team set aside their fears and apprehension and just jump in with those kids and love them and serve them with all their hearts. I loved it.

So the good part about being away for four Sundays is that I was reminded how much I love our church and I missed being here. Sometimes we get in the routine of life and one Sunday leads to the next and we honestly forget to appreciate how good it is at Foothills church and what a blessing our church is. Being away reminded me of that and I'm excited to be back worshiping with you this morning and studying God's word together. I trust that you were all loving and kind hosts to our guest speakers the last few weeks. Were those guys good to you?

Well, we are going to continue our summer series called "Everyday Faith". Each week we are exploring what it looks like to live the life Christ has given us. Today we are going to talk about how everyday faith means: Following Jesus together. And our target text is Hebrews 10:19-25.

While you are opening your Bible's I want to ask a few questions. Raise your hand if you have ever (currently or in the past) been the only Christ

follower in your workplace. That's really tough isn't it. Ok, how about this one. Raise your hand if you have ever been the only person in your family that is a Christ follower. I'm sure that feels very isolating and lonely. How about this, And please be honest, have you ever been in a season of life where choosing to follow Christ was difficult and it cost you, maybe it cost you friendship, maybe relationship with family, maybe it cost you your job or your promotion, big or small, has following Christ cost you anything? I ask these questions to point out that being a Christ follower can be really hard sometimes. It can cost us. In fact Jesus promised us that it would cost us, some of us everything, even our very lives. He even said that if we are going to follow him, it would mean picking up our cross daily to follow him. It's going to be hard.

Now, I'm *not* asking these questions so we can all feel sorry for ourselves, and have a pity party. I'm asking because I want us to recognize that the struggle is for real, and it has always been a struggle for believers. But I believe that the benefits of following Jesus vastly outweigh the cost of following him, would you agree?

The Author of the letter to the Hebrews was very familiar with the struggles of being a Christ follower. We don't know exactly who the author of the letter is. He was clearly well educated and uses the highest quality of writing in all of the New Testament. And he was writing to a church of mostly Jewish believers who were really struggling. They appear to be under tremendous pressure to renounce their faith in Jesus and in fact, some of the church have left their faith, presumably to return to Judaism. So the author is writing to encourage the believers to hold on to their faith, and he does it in two ways. First, he demonstrates that Jesus is superior to everything that Judaism has to offer, and second, by encouraging the church to pursue Christ together, in community.

Let's look at Hebrews 10:19-20. **Everyday faith is built on intimacy with God through the blood of Jesus.**

The author begins with two statements that summarize his argument. They begin with the word "since." Since we have confidence to enter the holy places. For all of human history since the Fall of Adam and Eve, sin has separated us from access to God. Sin prevented us from being in the presence of a Holy God, and having access to him. This separation was visually demonstrated by the curtain that separated the temple from the outer temple and the inner Holy of Holies. But now, because of the blood of Jesus, the penalty of our sin has been paid for and we are granted access through the curtain, into God's presence. We now have confidence to enter the holy places through the flesh of Jesus and we can enjoy true intimacy with God in ways that were impossible before. The gospel of Matthew tells us that at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross *"behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split."* (Matthew 27:51). Jesus tore down that barrier between God and us and gave us access to him.

Secondly, the author reminds us that our faith is strengthened by Jesus our High Priest. Verse 21 *"And since we have a great priest over the house of God."* The High Priest was the representative of the people to God. Once a year on the day of atonement the High Priest would enter the holy of holies and burn incense and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and make atonement for the sins of the people. He represented the people before God. This is why Jesus had to be fully man, to be born of a woman, so that he could truly represent humanity as our High Priest. In solidarity with humankind. Jesus perfectly represents God to humanity and perfectly represents humans before God. And Jesus isn't finished. He is continuing to minister and advocate for us before the Father. And

he gives us his Spirit to minister to us and strengthen us when we are in need.

So hold on to these two truths as we look at the rest of the passage. Jesus made a way for us to have access to God, and he continues to minister as our High priest.

Now the author shifts to exhortation, encouraging and challenging his friends to continue to grow in their faith, and to hold on to what they know is true. He uses three "Let us" statements. Not the vegetable, not lettuce, "let-us." This simple phrase "Let us" is a form of command that includes the person who is giving the command. It is an invitation to come along and go in the same direction together. We use it all the time in English but slightly abbreviated. Let's go!!!, let's talk, let's get some coffee, let's get in the car. The very nature of this phrase "let us" requires there to be more than one person. We would never say it to our selves or use it on an individual. There is always the speaker, and those that are being invited along. There are three "Let-us" statements here in Hebrews 10, but the author actually uses this phrase 12 times in the book. We are going to look at a few of them this morning.

1. Let us draw near to God. Hebrews 10:22. /4:15-16.

The author invites us to come near to God. Now Let's be honest, as Christians we don't always feel close to God, do we? And there are a lot of reasons for that. Sometimes, life is busy and we are just trying to survive and we barely manage to pray every day let alone spend time with God so of course we don't feel close to God because we aren't close to God. Sometimes we let sin creep in and it pushes us away from God. We know we are in the wrong and we feel guilty or maybe even shame and we don't want to confess our sin so we withdraw and keep God at arm's length. We separate ourselves from God and allow that distance to

grown. And let's be honest, sometimes we just don't feel close to God because we don't feel it. We might be doing all the right things to pursue our relationship with him and we just feel a million miles away from God.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we can draw near to God and we can do it together. I love how he says this in chapter 4:15-16. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Our sin, our poor choices will impact our nearness to God but it doesn't have to stay that way. Jesus understands our weakness and he loves us and invites us to come close through his forgiveness and we can do this together.

What does that look like? How do we draw near to God together? It can look like praying for one another. We have a prayer chain, over a hundred people ready to pray, you can join it. Send in your prayer requests, but even better than a pray chain is spending time with friends praying together. Every week at young adults we pray for each other at the end of our night. I love to hear our young adults praying for each other.

How else do we draw near to God together? We can be honest with each other. Honest with our struggles, honest with our fears and heartaches, and we can be honest with our sin. If sin is keeping you from drawing close to God, find someone that you trust and confess your sin to them and ask they to pray with you. James 5:16 says Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power.

Lastly, sometimes we have to remind ourselves that feeling close to God is not the same as being close to God. Everyday faith includes walking in faith day by day even when it doesn't feel like we are growing or

progressing or coming closer to the Lord. That's where we just put one foot in front of the other and trust that God is with us and is leading and guiding us because he is faithful.

2. Let us hold fast our confession. Hebrews 10:23

There is an unbelievable amount of false information and false doctrine flooding our world right now and filling our churches. Unbelievable, and I think it is going to get even worse in the coming years as the influence of Social Media grows and lies continue to spread. The simple truth of God's word is under constant attack by the world, and if that weren't enough there are countless churches who have abandoned the Bible for more popular humanist and progressive ideologies.

How do we sort through all the misinformation and falsehoods bombarding the world, how do we guard against false teaching in the church? We do it together. We study God's word together, we know what is right and true and good, together in the community of the church. And when one of our brothers or sisters goes a bit sideways in their beliefs, we lovingly remind them of God's word and steer them back in the right direction. Among our staff at Foothills we are regularly discussing things that we read or encounter through media, even things that we hear at our district conferences, and we wrestle through them together with God's word. I trust that if I ever go sideways in my beliefs that you all will set me straight, and I hope that you would ask me to do the same for you.

There are some really great creeds in the Christian tradition that help us understand our faith and define some key terms. Creeds like the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. Look them up some time. We are part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Alliance has a lengthy doctrinal statement that helps us to define our beliefs together with others in our denomination.

But what is our confession? What do we believe? We believe that God is Father, Son and Spirit. That Jesus was fully God and fully man and fully one. That he was born of the virgin Mary, and that he was without sin. We believe that humanity is fallen, and separated from God by sin, and that Jesus died on the cross and paid the penalty of our sins. That he rose again on the third day in victory over death, that he ascended to heaven and is at the Father's side. One day he will return in glory and rule over the earth. And we believe that anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus as lord shall be saved, forgiven of their sins and made new, and they will have eternal life in Jesus. As far as I can tell, those are the most important aspects of our confession of faith. Amen? Let us hold fast to our confession, and not be easily swayed by the falsehood that surrounds us.

The third Let-Us statement is this.

3. Let us stir up one another towards love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24-25.

Living out our faith is hard sometimes. Staying connected to a church community is work. Being invested in the church is even more work. It means getting up and getting dressed and showing up and talking to people, it means investing in relationships and loving and serving others and all of that can be a lot. If your life is overly full of other things, if you have social anxiety, if you are an introvert, or just don't really like people, it's easy to skip going to church or bible study or any of the ministries that we offer. And unfortunately we have technology and the internet so people can just stay home and watch church in their pajamas, but it just isn't the same. God created us for community, he made us for fellowship, and he created the church to be a community of believers who share life together and carry out God's work and his plan. We need to be together.

How do we stir one another up towards love and good works? It starts by being together face to face, side to side. Through time together we learn about one another, we talk, we encourage, and challenge each other. We pray and listen and consider new ways to serve and bless and proclaim the good news. We support and admonish and send and go together because we have each other in community.

Last week in Spain we flew in on Saturday afternoon, then on Sunday we went to church at a little church called Sierra North International Church. If any of you remember our Renew venue a few years ago, it felt just like Renew. And we sat with a woman who was a brand-new teacher at the LIFE International School and she had flown in on Saturday the same time we arrived. And she was in church the next day, eager to be there. After service we met another family that had just moved from the states on Thursday and they were there at church, excited to be part of the new community they had joined. I was so impressed with these people who were jet lagged and tired and could not wait to get plugged into their new church. I thought man, of all the people who had a reasonable excuse to stay home, it was them, but they wanted to be there.

So next time you are tempted to just stay home on a Sunday and watch church on TV, let me encourage you to come to church instead. You need to be here, we need you to be here, and we want to see you and do life with you and ministry with you. If you are on vacation or out of town, if you are sick, or recovering from surgery or simply cannot come, I understand. We have people who attend online from other states, and other countries, and I love that. But if you are local, and we haven't seen you in church in a while, please come, be with us and let us encourage one another and stir one another up towards love and good works. Amen?

Now I mentioned in the beginning that Hebrews has twelve Let-Us statements. We don't have time for all twelve, but I want to mention one more this morning because it fits so closely.

4. Let us worship together. Hebrews 12:28-29 *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*

Hebrews 13:15-16 *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

How do we continue to grow in our everyday faith? We worship the Lord together. Can we worship alone? Of course we can. Turn up that radio in your car and sing your face off like no one can hear you but God. Worship while you do the dishes or work in the yard, listen to worship music at your desk at work, all of those are great things. But worship should also be corporate. We should be singing songs of worship together. Some of the most powerful scenes of heaven that we get to glimpse in the book of Revelation show people from every nation and tribe worshipping the Lord together. Having a worship team lead us with an awesome sound system is great, amazing, but one thing I love is when I can hear the voices of the church raised in unison. It's the best.

In Paul's exhortation to the church in Ephesus he says "*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making*

melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:15-21)

Worshipping God together is one of the primary functions of the church. That is why we make it a priority every Sunday and in many of our midweek ministries. On August 16 we are planning a worship night in the Auditorium. Don't miss it.

We were never meant to live our faith alone. We are made for each other. To Let us remember to draw near to God, to hold fast our confession of hope, to stir one another up toward love and good deeds, and to Worship the Lord Together. Let's do that now.

Questions for reflection:

1. If you are coming to Church just once in a while, but not fully engaged, what is holding you back? What would be your next step in getting better connected to Foothills?
2. If you have been a part of Foothills for a while and you have mostly received from the church, how can you take the next step and begin investing in the lives others?
3. If you are a fully vested member of the church, serving, supporting, carrying out the ministry of Foothills, how can we better stir one another up towards love and good works? I'd love to know.

I've asked Mark and his team to close us in worship, we felt like it was the right thing to do in response to God's word this morning.

Let's Pray