

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday October 17, 2021. "Forward: Dreaming and Building a New World"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're pushing through 2021, and as COVID numbers drop we are even more committed to gathering in person. A growing group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's, youth areas and coffee spot have been fully open also and we're seeing a good response. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group. We want you to feel connected.

II Sunday.

We did a stand alone service from a conversation our staff and elders had back in September. We talked about what we love about NCC, and our hopes and dreams for our future. Those are found within the actual message. But if you're reading this, you already have an understanding of what NCC means to you, and why you are connected to us. But a few questions to pull those to the surface.

What does church mean to you? Why is it important?

What would you like to see the church be better at in general?

The scripture was one you've probably heard before, but we wanted to take a more loving grace-filled approach, than the typical guilt-inducing one. Read **Hebrews 10:23-25**, and we'll dig deeper into it.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

In what specific ways did it speak to you about the importance of gathering regularly?

How can you read this from a more grace-centered perspective than a condemning one?

Obviously this passage encouraged it's readers to make sure that they gather regularly for their own good. But Kal talked about some of the things church in general, and NCC in particular, can always work on, to make this time of gathering more impactful and meaningful. These thoughts came from a church in Portland Oregon about how we can move to be a church people are drawn to.

1 From ideal community to actual community. A lot of places don't have real, honest conversations, because they don't have the closeness and commitment to actual community to be able to handle or allow differences. Truth is, we're going to not be at the same place, believing the same things. We cannot fake it, just going along to get along. We have to openly admit we are all different here, and move into the discomfort of figuring out how to live with people different than us.

“People pretend to have a balanced and open friendship with one another, and cover up their differences by acting as if the differences do not exist.” -M Scott Peck

Unless we can actually love, and like, each other as we currently are, helping each of us to grow towards Jesus in our own unique way, then we will never be a ‘real’ community. We’ll just be a pretend, pseudo, superficial, community. Through open dialogue, mutual respect, and the humility to allow people to not have to be like us to be accepted by us, is an essential part of this process. We learn to ‘be with’ people not like us, and we learn to have real, meaningful conversations that challenge, build up, and respect. Being compassionately real will draw people into relationships. **For NCC to become an actual community, we have to gracefully connect with each other, and through the gift of grace love each other for who each of us is.**

2 From perseverance to inspiration. Relationships and church cannot be just gritting it out, having to attend. No one wants to be a part of something that doesn’t inspire them to live better. Church has to be more than just coming together because we’re supposed to. We must be part of a bigger, more meaningful work than just gathering. We are here, embracing our differences, to make a difference in the world. We’re to ***motivate(encourage) one another to acts of love and good works***. **For NCC to become an actual community, a place others want to become a part of, we have to be inspired to gather together to encourage each other to do acts of love and good works.**

3 From distance to close. This is how real relationships and actual community works. People are hard to hate up close. Closeness grows true empathy and ability to extend grace. We can become isolated and lose our ability to get along with people not like us. This is the curse of social media. It can feel like community, but again it’s just pseudo community. When I stay distant, I will only love/like people who are like me. Unless I’m physically doing life with people not like me, FORCED to figure out how to live with people different than me, I lose my ability to be loving ...completely. We have to learn to **communicate openly, disagree respectfully, and share life gracefully is when we can learn to be the body of Christ**. The truth and foundation within the idea of incarnation.

“Only love gets close enough to know” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer

COVID and more, are making us reevaluate how relationships, connection, and community are defined, and how they look in practice. No matter if it’s in person or digital, **community has to be active and two way**. Sitting passively, just consuming content is NOT community or connection. It’s consumption. Actual community has to be done in close two way dialogue with each other.

For NCC to become the actual community God wants us to become we have to intentionally draw closer to each other.

III Challenge.

These are hard words. But being church means facing these issues and encouraging each other to make real connections to form real community...family. Doing life with people different from us.

So, how can you make some little changes to commit to being an active part of a real community?