

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.
Sunday June 10, 2018 "I Love My Church-Going".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message on Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still go thru it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B Sunday's Message.

Sunday Lamar concluded his three-part series; "***I Love My Church***", with the last word in our vision-***GOING***". Two weeks ago we talked about "***GATHERING***", or the need to, and benefit from, assembling together as a diverse group of people only united in Jesus. Last week Tami challenged us to "***GROW***" thru regular Bible study, and getting together in small groups to help us develop a "***well-formed maturity***". And this past Sunday we were challenged to make our faith an active vital force of change 'here'...'now', in the ordinary, everyday, walking around life we live in.

If you grew up in the church, most of the emphasis on salvation, eternal life, was about some in the distant future. You accepted Christ, embraced faith because it came with the assurance of heaven and the avoidance of hell. The unintended consequences of such a narrow view of salvation solely focusing on the afterlife was we, Christians, developed an 'escape' mentality about our world rather than a "***bringing heaven to earth***" mindset.

Salvation was likened to being saved from a sinking cruise ship. Your ship is going under, you find your way into a lifeboat, and your goal is to try to tolerate the other people in the lifeboat, until you're actually rescued. We developed a distorted 'there' mindset that really only cared about the afterlife. And this infected our views about our current world. We didn't address the evils and injustice in the world, because- we were saved, trying to save others, and not really caring about working to make the world a more just and better place. And as you can see we've been pretty successful at not "***bringing heaven to earth***". And then we in the church wonder why Christianity has lost its appeal.

If you grew up in the church, reflect back to how they spoke about salvation and eternal life. Was it primarily about after we died, or was there also an emphasis about the 'here' and now too?

Lamar emphasized the importance of the word and idea of 'here'. Our understanding of salvation, eternal life, and discipleship cannot just be 'there', what happens to us after we die. It's not just sitting around waiting for the end. There **must be a 'here' component** in which we are passionate about doing the work of "***bringing heaven to earth***"....NOW!!

Lamar used two different passages to support this point.

John 17:11, 15.

In this passage, we see Jesus praying for his disciples before his death. He prayed for unity, which ties into the teaching from the GATHERING message two weeks ago, UNITY not UNIFORMITY. And then Jesus asks in both verses 11, and 15, to protect the disciples as they remain in the world. Or as we who follow Christ- live daily in our 'here'..the world we find ourselves in.

So...Describe your world; the ordinary, everyday, walking around life, you find yourself in daily?

Who do you come into contact with? Who is in your regular life?

What needs to do see, feel, observe...and even in the smallest most insignificant feeling ways, how can you begin to bring heaven into your current 'here'?

1 Peter 3:15.

This passage is a powerful one in which Peter helps us to re-align ourselves with the purpose and method of sharing what we believe. Without getting lost in the weeds, we want to give you a quick lesson on philosophy. We are at the tail end of what has been labeled the 'modern era'. The modern era is enlightened, and empirically based. That means we like to believe things that can be proved or there's evidence for what we believe, (which is not necessarily a bad thing), and our religious systems became slanted the same way. We built an entire system of theology, (how we understand and explain God), that was crafted to win debates and prove people who didn't think like us wrong. Think about Christianity's tendency to want to be 'right' often more than it wants to be good.

Peter is saying in this verse- our faith is not about being right, or having better evidence...which is where we tend to go. But rather our defense, reason, is not a better argument or more compelling evidence, but personal experiences you can share, for the hope you have in your ordinary, everyday, walking around life. Your beliefs are not about proving someone else wrong. Your beliefs are your story, your personal encounter with God that carries the message of hope...for you.

No one can argue your experience, encounter with God. No one can take away the hope you have.

So we're going to get really real and personal.

Why do you believe in God?

Why have you made the choice, (and it is a choice because many choose not to), to have a belief in God that the world may not understand and actually make your daily life more difficult?

What about your encounters with God, your personal experiences, could you share with someone else and they could possibly find hope for them?

The "GOING" is more than leaving tracks for people or telling them how to get to heaven. Or proving that what you believe is 'right'. "GOING" is about fully living into your 'here', sharing your reasons for hope, and bringing to "heaven to this place called earth". **And we GET to do this.**

As Lamar shared; **"If you are planning on staying 'here' then stay helpful!"**