

We are His Workmanship Series - We are His Assembly
Ryan Patty / 2.13.2022 / Hebrews 12:18-24

Good morning Christ Community! Thankful to be with you this morning and to be gathered as Christ's church. It's that idea of gathering that we are going to spend a lot of time on this morning to help us understand the nature and the role of the church in the Christian's life. So if you have a Bible, please open it up to the book of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 12 is where we are going to be this morning.

This is our fourth week in our "We Are His Workmanship" series as we are looking at the collective "we are" statements in the Bible and seeking to understand what the various indicatives and metaphors have to teach us about ourselves as the people of God. And so this week is "we are His assembly." Now I want to communicate some things to you up front. This sermon, while camping out in Hebrews 12, will be heavy on Biblical and Systematic Theology. All sermons have those two things, or at least should, but this one will lean heavily in those directions. So I want to admit that up front as a way for you to think through it with me. Typically I would expound on one passage for the entire time, but this morning is a little different.

Second, this is a bit of a hobby-horse for me. Each of us pastors have them just like I'm sure you have some. For **Pastor Jeff**, it's molinism and the relationship between God's sovereign plan and man's responsibility. The three associate pastors through Jeff's sharpening, whether we wanted it or not, can now defend each of their positions in regard to God's sovereignty and man's responsibility much more robustly.

For Pastor Patrick, it's the importance of Spiritual formation and the relationship between the heart and the mind is vital to understand for the Christian today. I share an office wall with him, a thin office wall I might add, and so we get to think through a lot of those things together and it's awesome. He's also rooting for the Los Angeles Rams in tonight's super bowl so I'll let you be the judge of his personal spiritual formation based on that statement...

For Pastor Daniel, he loves thinking through church and state relations and can has strong convictions on what God has given the government authority to do and not to do. He will be down front with any questions you might have about that after the service...

And last and least, my hobby-horse is the church, or the study of it. Ecclesiology. I love thinking through and discussing what constitutes health in a church and implementing "ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda," the

“church reformed, always reforming.” What might the church continue to reform in, in order to grow as the bride of Christ. And as we turn to this idea of us as God’s assembly, I simply want to say that I care about this idea a lot. I think the act of assembling or gathering is vital and foundational to Christian growth and maturity, and that to disregard it is perilous and in disobedience to the Scriptures.

Because as we have seen just over the past 2 years, when the act of gathering is taken away, there is a real effect on the people of God. In the providence of God, God has redeemed a people unto Himself, a people that He instructs to come together, to assemble, to the praise of His glorious grace. And I’m going to flesh out all of that through this sermon. But when that act of gathering or assembling is taken away, we feel the tangible effects. There is something vital missing when the church isn’t able to assemble. And so the negative side of our technological age combined with some of the “retraining” that happened through Covid results in that many people have resorted to an online form of church. Just a few months ago a dominant mega-church was celebrating their new meta-church that happens through the meta-verse (for those who have no idea what I’m talking about you should be grateful. But put it shortly, many are arguing that the future of the internet and how we connect through it will be done via headsets and augmented reality goggles where we live lives through a virtual reality - and so the aforementioned church held a church service through VR and had people attend through there).

Now, I have thoughts about all of that. But what I want to point out is that this retraining has made it where people now more than ever see assembling as optional. That as long as they have their small group or tune-in online that somehow counts and things are just fine. ***Now I want to clearly say, these remarks are not directed at those who have serious health concerns, or at those of older age who are shut-in, or those who are sick one week and decide to tune in online as a way not to spread sickness. I hope it’s clear that I am by no means addressing you [keep or no?].*** No, what I’m addressing is our comfort driven, church-must-fit-in-my-schedule, it’s just easier to watch on t.v. society that basically just sees the gathering, what we do on Sunday morning, as either optional or possibly even an annoyance to get through. If there is anything that Covid has taught the church, in my opinion, it is that we cannot underestimate the role that assembling or gathering plays in the life of the Christian, because that is what a church, in part, is; an assembled redeemed people.

So friends, there is a ton in this short passage and I can't cover everything, but since we are jumping into Hebrews let me provide a brief background. This book is focused on Jesus being our High Priest, the founder and perfecter of our Faith, and it is written to encourage Jewish believers not to turn back to an old way of life, to not forsake Jesus Christ. And so when you come to chapter 12, many scholars see this chapter and really this section and the few verses that follow, as the summary of the entire book. Many words and themes are repeated and it is here that the writer makes clear what is true about the people of God in the new covenant that we are now a part of.

Now I don't normally take that long before reading the text, so please forgive me. But my aim this morning is for us as disciples of Jesus Christ to understand the significance and importance of what it means to assemble, and how us assembling is fundamental to our lives as Christians.

Hebrews 12:18-24 (ESV)

18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Let's Pray.

From Hebrews 12 and the scope of Scripture, I want to highlight the importance of gathering or assembling or the church. Because really those three words are synonymous, all coming from ekklesia. Which literally means assembly or gathering and in the Christian understanding, the church. So what should we see? First:

1. God Has Always Gathered a People to Himself

Here is the Biblical Theology for us. When we think of God from Genesis 1 and 2, we see Him creating and filling. Creating a good, lush, beautiful garden that He resides in, His presence is there, and then creating a people to have

fellowship with. Not of necessity, but flowing out of His love. So he creates Adam and Eve and covenants with them (;]) by providing them with the blessed life and showing His blessings through His commands, what the peaceful life is like with Him. Now obviously the Fall distorts this, but the theme of covenanting together with God, of God drawing a people to Himself, continues. God has to start over because of humanity's sinfulness and so God calls Noah to him, shows Him grace and preserves him in the flood. The earth continues to be filled and then God calls a man named Abram, sets him apart, covenants with him, and promises to make his offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky.

After they have been slaves in Egypt some four hundred years, God calls Moses to lead his people out and it's in the Exodus where we see the idea of assembling start to take more shape as Israel would assemble before Moses or before God to hear the words of God. This is what we see recounted in our passage from Hebrews, as the author reminds us of Ex. 19 and the people assembling before God - 18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." The writer of Hebrews is telling us that in this assembly, they heard from the Lord, but there was still a massive barrier, an infinite gulf between God and them because their sins had yet to be permanently atoned for.

And then after a time of peace, Israel was sent into exile. But even in exile we see in Nehemiah where the people are able to go back to Jerusalem, rebuild the wall, and then assemble as Nehemiah reads from Moses and the people thank God for His graciousness to them.

So even in the OT, we see this connection between God calling a people to Himself and those people coming together, gathering, assembling, as a means of worship and praise to God. As we transition to the NT, the temple has been rebuilt and the place of assembling for the people of God is in the synagogue. A place of instruction, of teaching God's Word and a place for prayer. This was normal in Jewish life. We see Jesus teaching there in Luke 4 and in the start of the early church we see it was normal for Christians to meet there, to assemble, so Acts 19 can say of Paul that "he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God."

And as the early church flourishes, it's eventually spreading into larger houses where the churches can meet and assemble. So in this short tracing of God's people assembling, we see something; namely, that God's people gather together in order to hear from God, that is to hear from His word and the instruction of it, and to respond in praise.

Yet while this idea of assembling is important, I want to hit on this idea of *who assembles*. Because in this point I stated that God has always gathered a people to Himself. And so who makes up the church? The assembly? It is the blood-bought people of God. As Paul writes to the Ephesians 2:13-22 - 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Friends, Ephesians 1 and 2 summarizes the Gospel beautifully. We have sinned before a holy God and can now no longer assemble with him, can now no longer come together with Him. But God, in his infinite kindness, sends His one and only Son Jesus Christ to come and shed his blood, to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, so that we might once more know and fellowship with God. We can gather with Him.

So God, as in His actions with Adam, Noah, Abraham and therefore Israel, and now in the new covenant still sovereignly gathers a people to Himself. Romans 8:29-30 picks up the same idea - 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God assembles his people. Have you ever asked yourself, what makes this gathering different? What makes us coming here different from going to the school board meeting you might be a part of, or from gathering with a bowling club, or from going to any other organizational meeting? It's because the gathering or the assembly of a local church is where the people of God meet with God. This is where he has promised His presence to be. This is what Jesus promised to build. This is where the Kingdom of Heaven assembles on earth. Let me unpack that:

You see, this word for assembly or gathering or church comes from the Greek Word Ekklesia. And this word has political overtones, in the centuries before Jesus it was used in Greek cities to describe a gathering, or the assembly, of full citizens of that city, or the polis. Citizens who had a say in the life of the city. They would make decisions on judicial and political matters. And while in Jesus' day the word gained a broader usage to imply any gathering or assembly, the political usage was still real, as in Acts 19 where the town clerk of Ephesus tells a crowd to bring their charges to the courts, or if the courts don't satisfy their concerns to settle them in the "regular assembly" or ekklesia (JL).

But the startling fact about all of this is that Jesus easily could have continued the tradition of the synagogue. This was the popular place to meet, where instruction took place in Jewish life, where he even taught as I said before. But notice this sequence in the book of Matthew:

- Matt. 4:17 - Jesus after his baptism and temptation begins his ministry telling people to "repent, for the **Kingdom of Heaven** is at hand."
- Matt 5, the Sermon on the mount - Jesus explains what life in the **Kingdom** looks like and who will be able to receive the **Kingdom**.
- Matt. 6:10, 33 - Jesus tells his followers what it looks like to pray for the **Kingdom** and what it means to seek the **Kingdom of God**.
- Matt. 10:7 - Jesus sends out the disciples on a journey to go and proclaim the **Kingdom of Heaven** is at hand.
- Matt 12:26-30 - Jesus performs miracles and binds the strongman, therefore demonstrating the **Kingdom**.
- Matt. 13:11 - He reveals that only disciples can know the secrets of the **Kingdom of Heaven**. And then throughout the rest of Matthew 13 Jesus uses 7 parables to describes what the Kingdom is like.
- Matt. 14 and 15 - Jesus does miracle after miracle to prove that the **Kingdom of God** is really among them. Has really come.

And then we get to Matthew 16 and as Michael read for us in our scripture reading Jesus says He will build His Kingdom...Wait no His synagogue, wait No that's not what He said. Jesus said He will build His church, His ekklesia, His assembly. And that the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.

The astute reader has to wonder, why this change. Kingdom, kingdom, kingdom is being proclaimed and then Jesus says I'm going to build my church. A Kingdom is a political thing. Does he change the subject? He does not - Matt. 16:19 - 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

By giving the keys to Peter it is the protestant understanding that He is giving them to the apostles and we would argue, in light of the same word usage in matt. 18, to the church overall.

Through His assembly, Christ is building a new political and covenant reality. A new Israel according to Galatians 3. Now let's look back at Hebrews 12 - as he contrasts the reality of assembling in the Old Covenant with what takes place today under the New. - 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven...

Something huge has taken place in redemptive history. That chasm, the infinite gap I mentioned earlier, has now been bridged by the infinite Son of God, Jesus Christ. The chasm has been swallowed up by the cross. And what God does is draw a people to himself. He does this invisibly. We can't see the regeneration of the heart take place, only the subsequent confession and fruit that comes from that heart. So God gathers a people to himself invisibly, and it is in our local churches that the invisible is made visible, as we see, and hear, and experience the Kingdom of God on earth.

So what is taking place here is in one sense now old, and in another sense completely new. God has always been drawing and gathering people to himself, a people that come together and hear from His Word. Yet, this new covenant community now has direct access to Him because of the blood of Christ. In our Union with Christ, we experience a tangible change, a new reality, truly a new heart that informs and shapes what this life looks like and in turn reveals what the fully consummated Kingdom will look like.

2. God's Church (His Assembly) is Distinct

- The definition of distinct is to be recognizably different from something else. Recognizably different is what the church is called to be.

There are two levels we need to think through about how we understand the church. When scripture speaks about the church it typically does so via the universal and the local.

- Universal: comprised of all believers in Christ spread throughout all the world
 - This is what it means in our passage from Hebrews 12 when the author writes of “the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven..” All the people who know Christ, have come to Christ, and live as His disciples are now the firstborn of God via their union with Christ. What was once only true of the children of Israel is now true of those found in Christ.
- Local: comprised of believers living in a similar geographic area who covenant together to be a church
 - Some of my language might be unfamiliar here so let me explain.

From the early church in Acts, through the epistles of Paul, and to the church throughout the last two thousand years, what sets a truly Christian church apart from any other entity is that it is marked by two things: the right preaching of God's Word and the right practicing of the ordinances. When believers come together around those two things, then you have a church.

During the Reformation era and after, various protestant groups saw this and tried to distill down what it means to be a church in their various confessions:

- The Lutherans in the Augsburg Confession, The Anglicans in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Presbyterians in the Westminster Confession, and the Baptists in the London Confession all agree on those 2 fundamental marks of a church: The right preaching of the Word and the right practicing of the ordinances. Granted, where all the splits occur is over how to practice the ordinances but that's a conversation for another day...

So when I say that the Assembly of God, His Church, is distinct, what I mean is that it is clearly marked from other assemblies by those two things. Some of you have moved and lived in different places, or even if you haven't you might have had to switch to a different church in a given area, even here we are meeting people week after week who have come and are trying out different churches. And that's great. But Historically, what should guide any of us in that situation are these two marks, does the church preach Christ, the whole counsel of God, right doctrine when

it is gathered. And does it faithfully seek to administer baptism and the Lord's supper. All other things are secondary to those.

So practically speaking, what else should define our assembly? How else is it distinct?

The Gathering of the Church:

- Glorifies God - Ephesians 3:20-21 - 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
- Pursues holiness - when Peter was writing to the dispersed churches he tells them in 1 Peter 1:14-15 - 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - Friends this doesn't mean we don't struggle with sin, but this is what I have been reiterating to the youth in the past few weeks, God's Holy Spirit enables us to resist temptation and to not give into sin. We are being conformed day by day to the image of Christ and therefore should expect our gathering of saints to be pursuing holiness together. Again, we aren't perfect and never will be, but while sin remains it no longer reigns, and we need to be reminded of that.
- Edifies the Saints - to edify means to build up, to instruct, to encourage, and shape Christ's people to be more like Christ. Therefore everything done in our gatherings should be to this end. Colossians 3:16 - 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Encouraging, teaching, and admonishing your brothers and sisters with the Word here is fundamental in what it means to belong. That is in part how we show our care and love for one another.
- Promotes fellowship and mutual encouragement - The gathered people of God fellowship with one another not just on Sundays but Monday through Saturday as well as an expression of Hebrews 10:23-25 - 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- Evangelizes outsiders - Christians will evangelize throughout the week yes, but our assembling still is a witness to those who don't know Christ. 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 - 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes

together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

- Remembers the Lord and proclaims His death and resurrection - 1 Corinthians 11:26 - 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

All of these and more occur when we gather together as the people of God. There is something tangible happening to one another and in the same vein, something tangible being proclaimed to those who don't know Christ. Now someone could easily say, but does this mean you don't do those things in your individual Christian lives. By no means! I'm not saying that at all. Or to address the popular phrase, "**the church isn't a place it's a people.**" In one sense, that's very true. In another sense though, it misses the mark. What's more biblical is to say that the church is a people assembled in a place. Churches have to assemble to be a church, it's in part what makes us the church!

The same is true of my kids playing on sports teams. Jed and Blakely are currently playing YMCA basketball. It's a lot of fun to watch them. They have their mother's athleticism so they do great. But When they're not playing, on the days they don't have games, they are still a part of the team, just as we are still a part of the church when we aren't assembled. Yet in the same vein, the team comes together, they assemble, to play games. That's defining of what it means to be a team and if they don't ever do that then one could say they aren't really a team. The same is true of the church; churches assemble, and those who don't regularly assemble with the church, yet think they are still a part of it, aren't really at all.

You see, God made us as physical and spiritual beings, really we are whole persons. We shouldn't always elevate one over the other but rather hold them together. But the spiritual realities that take place in our gatherings take place precisely because we are *physically* gathered. They are inextricably linked. The physical gathering, the physical assembly of the congregation is where God's power is displayed and recognized.

The church, then, is to be set apart and distinct as the bride of Christ. All the local churches around the world are outposts of the Kingdom of God, lighthouses that project light into a dark world, and all of us are seeking to be faithful until the Lord returns. And that brings us to our last point:

3. We Look Forward to an Eschatological Gathering

I want to read the end of our Hebrews passage once more, and then put it together with what we see in Revelation: 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

This is what is true of us now. The writer of Hebrews is using the perfect tense throughout, it is an accomplished reality for us. We have come to the heavenly city, to Mt. Zion, we are enrolled in Heaven, we are united with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and His blood doesn't cry out for wrath and redemption like Abel's but instead satisfies the wrath of God and accomplishes redemption for us. THIS is our reality now! Yet, we wait, we know that Christ will come once more, we still struggle with sin and its effects, and so we look forward to what one day will be. And in Revelation 19:6-9 we see this as the people of God are rejoicing in their fellowship with God in the age to come - 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." And then Revelation continues into chapter 21 and notice the similar language that we see in Revelation 21 that we also have from our passage in Hebrews 12, look where we get to dwell - Revelation 21:1-4 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God

himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, a holy city, the marriage supper of the Lamb, the place where God dwells with his people. All of this is what we look forward to, and as the author of Hebrews tells us, we, the assembly of the firstborn, that is the assembly of God’s people because of Christ, experience a taste of that heavenly reality now when we assemble as His church, which we will one day experience fully when universal church is assembled in the new Jerusalem! How awesome is that?

When we gather, when we assemble as God’s people, it is a foretaste of the end times gathering, the eschatological gathering of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who are gathered around the throne and proclaiming praises to God. When Christ ushered in the Kingdom of God, He chose to do so through the establishment of His church. And as local churches we are a part of the Kingdom in a real, tangible, experiential way. Therefore, we cannot forsake the gathering or the assembly as it says in Hebrews 10. We cannot forsake our responsibility to physically gather.

So let me close with two application points on how we can apply the importance of the assembly to us today. I’m sure there are many more and I trust the Spirit to apply this as He sees fit, but two brief points.

Application:

First is this,

1. Do you prioritize church?

What I mean by that question is do you prioritize the Sunday gathering in your life? In our western culture we are inundated with distractions, consumerism, and the appeal of not “missing out” on something else that could be happening. But for the Christian here today, God has called you to prioritize life in the local church, and fundamental to life in the local church is you being here and gathered with us. So practically speaking, does work order your life?

Do kid’s activities order your life? What is most important in your week and then what takes second fiddle to that?

Fathers, do you lead your families in such a way that they know and understand why it is important to gather with God’s people? Your children are watching. They see what you prioritize, and then they will prioritize that for their children. So is church what’s being sacrificed on the altar or is it the foundation of your family’s week and then

everything else flows around that? The point here is not that attending church makes you a Christian, don't misunderstand me. The point is that attending church, gathering with God's people, is **what Christians do**. So don't forsake it. Immediately after the writer of Hebrews states that in chapter 10 he follows it up with the judgment of God. There are eternal implications at stake here.

2. Do you minister in the church?

I use the word minister instead of serve here intentionally. Do you minister in the church? What do I mean here? Well in Matthew 16 when Christ said that He would build His church, there is an implication there. He *will* build it. As Paul later tells us He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to *equip* the saints for the work of ministry. Christ will build His church. He provides it certain leaders to aid and facilitate, but friends you who are indwelled by the Holy Spirit are called to minister within it! This was the promise hinted at in the Old Covenant that the New Covenant now makes a reality. **When we come to Christ and are united to Him, He makes us a Kingdom of priests**. The promised reality of the New Covenant is that we will ALL know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. It's not just an analogy to make us feel better but an objective reality. We have a job to do. Where is the temple of God today? In the church, "don't you know that you are God's temple? And that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Paul tells the Corinthian church. And just as a priest was to serve in the temple, so we as a Kingdom of priests should be serving one another in the new temple, His church.

So what the NT reveals is that the job of every member of the New Covenant is to be a teacher, to minister to one another. We can **all** encourage one another, we can **all** teach one another, we can **all** point one another to Scripture. This is in part the blessing and the beauty of the church. Knowing that your brother or sister is grieving and coming alongside them in the midst of it and ministering to them. Rejoicing with another over the growth that God has brought about in their life. The mature coming alongside to help those who need to mature. The beauty of this temple compared to the old is that God's Spirit has been given to us, enabling us and gifting us to minister to one another. So how are you doing that? If you are a Christian here this morning, you have been gifted by God's Spirit to bless others in the church, so I pray that each of us would.

Would you pray with me?