

Title: Stir Up! (In fact, do it more)
Text: Hebrews 10.19-25 (24-25)
Theme: Gospel driven body life
Series: Hebrews #28
Prop Stmt When the gospel is truly embraced by the church love for each other as expressed in priority given to gathering for worship and in serving one another will be on full display.

Before we read this text, I need to issue a warning. What you are about to hear will likely cause some of you to think differently about your life, the church and even the gospel. The aim of this text is stretch you so that your heart will hold more of Jesus because that is the aim of God for every one of his followers. He wants you to be stretched so that your heart is widened so that your capacity to receive love and your capacity to understand God's love and your capacity to demonstrate love grows more and more.

But some of you may not want to be stretched. You are content with a thimble-sized heart that has enough room for a select few. God wants so much more for you and me, than we usually want of ourselves, so we misinterpret his stretching and misjudge his motives because he loves you too much to leave you as you are. Beloved, if we take this text to heart, it will not leave us as we are. My aim this morning is to be an instrument in the hands of God that is used to stretch your heart. I have prayed that my motives in pushing you this morning are driven by love for you and I have prayed that God will be gracious and to permit that you receive it in that spirit. Are you ready? Perhaps I should pray this morning before read the text, rather than after.

Read Text:

Before you are seated, I would like for you to turn to the person on either side of you and say to them, "Press on Pilgrim." Then, you may be seated.

"Press on pilgrim" is the theme of this book, and as we can see from this text, it is an admonition that is to be given to each other in a congregational setting. Three times we read the words, "let us." When we read this paragraph and this particular command, we need to think of the community of believers who have gathered together for worship. In this final "let us" we see...

1. **The command to take personal responsibility for the health of the church.**
(24)

- A. The command is congregational**

This command is not limited to the elders and ministry staff. This is a command for every single member of the church. "Let us." Your orders from God are right here. You are to consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. Let's make certain that we understand what that means.

B. The command demands intentional mental energy.

The word “consider” is translated from one of nine words used in the NT that speak of giving careful, deliberate thought. Think this through. Work this out in your mind. Sit down and do some careful analysis of this. In fact, the tone of this particular word has the idea of carefully evaluating the health of the church, looking specifically for anything that may be a threat to the health and viability of the congregation.

C. The command is rooted in the gospel.

And the reason for giving this so much mental energy and then action is because of the reality of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf by opening up for us a new and living way to the Father. Since we have this access to God through the death of Christ for our sins and since we have a high priest who not only died for us, but rose again for us, and ascended for us and is interceding for us, right now, and (as we see at the end of v.25) is returning for us, we had better be serious about how we living this out – right now by reminding each other of this!

Sometimes Christianity is presented as being mindless. Oh no! You need to look at this command and ask yourself this question: “how have I this past week, even today, how have I been an instrument in the hands of God to stir up another brother or sister here in the church to really love God or to faithfully serve him?”

Sometimes Christianity is presented as being passive and non-committal – that is not the real deal.

D. This command is intense.

Did you know that the leaders in the early church could be extremely intense? In one case, noted by Luke in Acts 15, Barnabas and Paul got into a fight. The disagreement was so sharp that they separated paths over it. That word for fight is the word translated as “stir up” here in v.24. I was at a football game the other night. The one high school team was getting pounded, in part because they kept getting penalties. I think there was a stretch in which they were penalized 3 or 4 plays in a row. It was maddening. Finally, after an offensive linemen was again called for illegal motion, his teammate went over to him, grabbed him by the facemask and head-butted him, as if to say, “if you don’t wake up, I’m going to wake you up!” Now, what do you think would have happened if someone from the other team had done that to that offensive lineman?

That is the idea of this word “stir up”. It means that you are to be an instrument of change in the lives of your brothers and sisters in the congregation. Your relationship with them is to move them, prod them, challenge them, encourage them, nudge them, pull them, push them, head-butt them if necessary (in love of course) to love and good works. In other words, you are to help them get back in the game. But that is not always easy is it?

What happens when you see someone discouraged? What happens when you know someone is pouting or they have their nose bent out of joint over something? You see it,

and then this big debate goes on in your head. You know that you need to say something, but then again, you really don't feel like getting involved. You really don't have time to hear all of the drama or listen to the pettiness, or feel responsible for one more situation in life. How many of you took out your calendar today and you scheduled time to help people get their nose back in place? But that is part of our responsibility to each other. We all have blind spots and we don't see ourselves correctly. Usually we think more of ourselves than we should and we fail to really make much of Christ. We each need people who love us enough to tell us the truth and we need to be those people who love others more than ourselves and help people get their noses back in place. But that is messy. It takes time. And we think that we are too busy with other things to take the time to help people really work things out. For all of our technological connectedness, we can certainly live rather disconnected can't we?

Our mission is to help prod a person to love that is demonstrated in good works; that is in rendering service/ministry to the body. This assumes that members of the church are already involved in serving each other in the local church.

2. **The warning regarding isolating yourself from true fellowship in the body.**
(25a)

There is no way that you can take responsibility for the spiritual health of the church if you are not even faithful in attendance and involvement in worship and fellowship. (episynagoguge – a term that can refer to the act of assembling or to the actual assembly itself). What was happening? Some of the members of the assembly had stopped assembling. This is an enormous concern on the part of the AH and may well be the immediate issue that sparked his reason for writing this letter. He understands the connection between disconnecting from the body and apostasy (a warning that we will look at next week). The one leads to the other. At this point in the letter we can only speculate as to what some of those reasons may be, but later on we find out a bit more.

There were people who for whatever reason had drifted away from body life involvement. They backed out of caring for each other, and now were not even attending when the body gathered together. This is a huge concern and not because they were trying to set some sort of attendance record but the Spirit of God knows that when you neglect worship and fellowship, you are revealing that you really do not believe in the significance of the gospel and the ongoing work of Christ as Savior, Priest and King. The responsibility for the entire community of believers rests upon the entire community. That means that one of the reasons why we come together is to watch over one another and if someone is missing then it is to be an exercise love that is seen in the action of contacting them to see if everything is alright. For those who say, "Everything is fine, but I am just choosing to be involved in other things instead of the corporate worship of God and the life of the body", we are to challenge them because everything is not right.

Beloved, there is no way that we can exercise care for each other if we do not meet regularly together. Of course you are going to feel a bit disconnected if you disconnect yourself and choose not to be together when we gather together. I don't expect you to be

here every time the doors are open. I am not here every time the doors are open, which is not the point. But, when the body assembles as a body to worship and fellowship as we are called to and as we do on Sundays, it is my responsibility to be here in order to carry out my part in and to the body. Certainly there are legitimate things that can hinder that from time to time, but there are a lot of lifestyle choices that reveal that some really do not see their part in the body the way Christ does.

The failure to prioritize worship and fellowship is usually the by-product of our very busy lives. We choose to be busy because we are trying to keep up with the hamsters. We think that our worth and identity is found in the amount of things that we can fit in to a single day. We are so busy taking our kids to so many things that we don't even have time to be their parents. It's all for the kids. NO IT ISN'T! Wake up!! You're drinking the cool-aid of the culture. God is not impressed with your time management when you have no time for his number one priority on the earth – his church. So, what specifically are we called to do?

3. **The admonition to be an instrument of increasing encouragement.** (25b)

When you put this all together, the AH is saying this: We all need to give careful consideration to how we can encourage each other in such a way that it promotes love and service from every single member. Encouraging others is your (my) mission from God.

At the end of this verse the AH adds a bit more racking fuel to the engine of fellowship. Standing over this admonition, in fact standing over this entire book is a sense of urgency on the part of the writer that I have attempted to capture even by the manner of my preaching. The Day is drawing near. (end of v.25) That is a reference to the Day of the Lord which is a phrase that is used in both testaments of the Bible to refer to a time of intense activity on the part of God that brings visible judgment to the enemies of God and rescue for the people of God. Here the AH is saying, "Look, very soon now, this present darkness will be over and that which we have been living for will be manifested right before our eyes. Every single day we are that much closer to its realization. Because of that, we need to live every single day with even more urgency because today may be the day that Christ returns. Right now, we live in the gap between promise and fulfillment. Living the gap is often difficult and discouraging. And some lose sight of the goal, but that is day drawing near. If we knew this morning that Christ would return today, would we not have encouraged someone who has been complacent and disconnected to wake up and address that?

Now, what is the theme of Hebrews? Press on Pilgrim! How does God provide grace for us to do that? A large part of the grace that God provides for your faithfulness comes through the ministry of your brothers and sisters in the church. Do you see why we stress church membership so much? It is for your joy!

I am told that the giant redwood trees in Northern California actually have a rather shallow root system, but their enormous weight is supported by the fact that their roots

interlock with the roots of the other trees, so that together they hold each other up. One tree by itself would not stand in the wind, but together they cannot be toppled.

Today's sermon is actually going to be one of the longest ones that has ever been delivered in this church. You/we are the conclusion. You/we will preach with our choices what we think of Christ, his gospel and his church.

Will you consider right now three things?

- 1) Who can you prod or stir up?
- 2) What should you do, or say to them? (card, visit, coffee, phone call, etc.)
- 3) When will you do it?

Are you a bit disconnected? Have your feelings been hurt? Are you open to someone prodding you, encouraging you, or even correcting you? How do you respond to helpful correction? "He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Did you realize that he uses other believers in the church as the means of carrying out that good work of making you like Christ? We are in this together, bound by Christ. And together pilgrims, we press on.