

Victory of the Lamb – January 21, 2018 – New Year Revolution – Community
Hebrews 10:19-25 - An Encouragement to be M.A.D. – Pastor Bill Limmer

As you know, people can really get mad on FB. And sometimes it is over the most ridiculous things. When was the last time you got MAD? A week or two ago? On the way to church? What was the reason you got MAD? Who made you MAD? Today I want to give you encouragement to be **M.A.D. that is Making A Difference.**

A teacher in New York decided to honor each of her seniors in high school by telling them the difference they each made. She called each student to the front of the class, one at a time. First, she told each of them how they made a difference to her and the class. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters, which read, **“Who I Am Makes a Difference.”** Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact encouragement would have on the community. She gave each of the students 3 more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this encouragement. Then they were to follow up on the results and see who honored whom and report back to the class in a week. One of the students in the class went to a Jr. Executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. And then he gave the now 2 extra blue ribbons and said, “We are going to do a class project on encouragement and recognition and I’d like you to go out, find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, and then give them the extra ribbon so they can acknowledge another person. Then please report back to me what happened.” Later that day the Jr. executive went to see his boss who was often grouchy. He sat down with his boss and told him he admired him for being a creative genius. The boss was taken aback. The Jr. Executive asked if he could place the blue ribbon on his boss shirt. He then gave him the last ribbon and told them about the class project and asked if he could honor someone else. That night the boss came home and sat down with his 14 yr. old son. He said the most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the Junior Executive’s came in and told me he admired me as a creative genius. And then he put this ribbon on me that said, “Who I am Makes a Difference.” He gave me an extra ribbon to honor someone who is special to me. As I was driving home tonight I was thinking about you. I want to honor you. My days are really hectic. When I come home I am often tired and don’t pay a lot of attention to you. Sometimes I get upset at you for not making better grades or for your messy room, but I just want to sit to here with you tonight and let you know you make a difference in my life. You are a great kid and I love you. The boy began to cry. And he explained that he earlier that night he had written a suicide note explaining why I killed myself and asking for your forgiveness. I didn’t think you cared.

I want you to take a moment about someone in your life who makes a difference in your life. And I want you to tell them. Maybe that is person sitting next to you. Maybe you are going to need to make a phone call right after church. Maybe you are going to need to make a face to face visit real soon.

Getting MAD really all starts with Jesus. I want to share some encouraging words for you today from the book of Hebrews. Verses 19-23 **Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new (freshly slain) and living way opened for us**

through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. These words tell us we aren't on the outside. These verses talk about community/connection. We are brothers and sisters connected by faith to God and one another through Jesus. Through these words the writer is making a spiritual application by talking about the physical temple. The inner part of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, was off limits to everyone except the high priest. If you and I were live back then, we would not be able to go in there. And the high priest could only go in once per year. He would wear a long rope in case he fell so that those on the outside could grab the rope and pull him out without entering the Holy of Holies because they were absolutely not allowed to enter and to enter into the presence of the holy God would mean death. The high priest would make a sacrifice and sprinkle the blood of the animal as a symbolic cleansing for the people of God. The point of this passage is that Jesus acted as both the High Priest and the sacrifice so that by the outpouring of his blood in his death he did forgive our sins and give you and me access to the holy God. The word "new" meant fleshly slain. An amazing picture of Christ on the cross. Jesus on the cross is God saying you are special to me and I love you. And I am going to make a difference in your life! Here is a passage about God's love I shared with one of my friends, when he lost his job and was feeling like a complete failure. Ever feel like that? Zephaniah 3:17 **The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.** The gospel encourages us with the truth of God's love for us. We don't have to fear God's judgment; we don't have to cower in his presence. Because Jesus did that we have bold access to God. In fact wherever we go, God is already there. We can enter his holy presence because we belong in his presence through Christ. And check it out Jesus is coming again and we are going to be able to be in the presence of God forever. It is based on God's work not your or my good work. God is faithful. Because heaven is secure in Jesus we can put off our insecurities knowing that God has accepted us. And since God is with us we can make a difference.

Verse 24 **And let us consider (committed to your well-being) how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.** Spur one another on. Get motivated, excited about being loved by God and being a light and an encouragement through Jesus to others. Here is an example I ran across on FB Wednesday morning posted by one of our members. She said from one of our members who shared a devotion and she said, "It always amazes me how often these daily devotions are exactly what I need to hear from God." Another example: Isn't it great to be in the company of a dear friend! Thursday lunch for me! It was awesome. Small Groups.

1 Corinthians 12:27 **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** An elderly church member was always doing puzzles. I would walk in and sit down on the couch and next to the couch was a card table with a puzzle on it. Sometimes the puzzle was partially finished and sometimes it was completed. Growing up I liked doing puzzles. When I was in preschool the puzzles were like 6 piece puzzles. Then I graduated to grade school and the puzzles were like 100-piece puzzles. And now there

are 3 D puzzles, glow in the dark puzzles, many thousand-piece puzzles. One thing I can't stand about doing puzzles is if there is a piece missing, whether it was a 6-piece puzzle or multi-thousand piece puzzle.

Scripture says, 1 Corinthians 12:27 **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** You are so special to God. He wasn't just willing to die for you, he did die for you. We were made not by the result of intense experimentation, not by random chance but we are custom made by God. David says in Psalm 139 that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We each have our important place.

Satan tried to jack our puzzle. He tries to get some of us to think we don't matter or it won't matter if we don't do anything. Picture the puzzle minus just one piece. Satan wants us to fight over who is better, who has a more prominent role, the best gift etc., Picture a puzzle with two pieces stacked on top of each other instead of connected to each other. Or Satan will try to get us to think we can do all this by myself. Think of one puzzle piece trying to be the whole puzzle.

There is absolutely no one like you. You are a part of the body of Christ. There is a place for you. I want to encourage you with that to do good and to glorify God. I want you to encourage the person sitting right next to you right now. Say to them: There is absolutely no one like you. You are a part of the body of Christ! God loves you! If no one is sitting next to you, I want you to know the Holy Spirit is whispering in your ear, There is absolutely no one like you. You are a part of the body of Christ! God loves you!

Friends, about the only time we get encouragement right is at funerals. We talk about all the good qualities of the person. But it is too late. Here is how to tell if someone needs encouragement – If their heart is beating, they need encouragement. We all ask the same question, do I fit in? (at work, school, home, church). Every man has a question and it sounds like this: Do I have what it takes to succeed at work, at home, as a father? Every woman has a question and it sounds like this: Does he notice me? I am I beautiful enough? Am I a high enough priority that he will spend time with me? Do I matter enough to get his attention? For dads, you need to know that you need to be on the front line of encouraging your daughters because every single magazine out there is telling her she isn't skinny enough, she isn't pretty enough, as they have pictured of airbrushed models. The daughter wants to know does my dad notice me. She will look for love. The only question is will she find it in a nurturing father or someone who just wants to use her. Encouragement is a win/win. Proverbs 11:25 **Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.**

Our culture craves community and yet stays away from community. Watch Netflix and stay away. Our world is fractured – corruption in politics, immorality here, there and everywhere, legalization and promotion of sin, liberalism and legalism in the church. Our natural response is to be angry, critical or watch Netflix and Stay Away from people. But these do not address discouragement, fear and worry. Jesus didn't run away and hide. He reached out and loved. He invited others in. He encouraged. Silence is not encouraging. Jesus didn't remain silent. His love spoke loud and clear on the cross. His love was trumpeted powerfully and distinctly on Easter Sunday. Jesus has made, is making and will make a difference in your life! He is alive for you.

Here is something for you to do, if you are up for it: 1. Thank God for Jesus. 2. Tell someone who has made a difference in your life that they have made a difference. 3. Encourage one another toward love and good deeds!