

**Victory of the Lamb- Path to Victory –  
Gather - Hebrews 10:25 Pastor Bill Limmer**

One of my all-time favorite foods is brownies. The ingredients to make this tasty treat are fairly simple. But individually not all the ingredients are so tasty. Like the Wesson oil. Yikes. But even the tasty ingredients make something **better together** than alone. For the brownies to be brownies and to taste like brownies you need all the ingredients and they all need to be mixed together and not just put in bowl and put in the oven.

Today we are going to begin looking at the ingredients of the Christian church here on earth in a series called Path to Victory. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave Christians this mission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. In other words, he told us to mature as followers of Jesus and share the good news of God with others so they can come to faith and then grow in faith too. We are to both grow and go.

The early church took Jesus mandate to heart. In this series we will look at and put into practice the five commitments of not only the early Christian church but the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church as well: Gather, Groups, Give, Grow, and Go. (Path to Victory series graphic) All these things are going to be **better together**.

Today we are going to look at one of the ingredients to make the Christian church on earth: “Gather.” Gather as in committed to weekly worship service. The Victory of the Lamb Membership Covenant guides us back into Scripture with the words of Hebrews 10:25: **Let us 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.**

The obvious reason the writer wrote these words is because some had fallen into bad habits that were leading them down a course that would shipwreck their faith. And one of those bad habits was not gathering. They knew Jesus was important, but they had forgot that He was ALL important. Jesus address this too in Luke 14:16 **Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ <sup>18</sup> “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ <sup>19</sup> “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ <sup>20</sup> “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’** People of old, sometimes like you and me made up excuses to not be with God and God’s people. I am building a house so I can’t come. I just got tickets to the Packer game so I can’t come. I stayed out later than I wanted so I can’t come. I still remember a time my junior year in high school. It was Thanksgiving Eve and that is when I my church that was meeting in the YMCA could have worship but I had basketball practice for a tournament that we were going to be in on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Let’s see worship the true God in one hand or practice for a game in the other hand. How do you think the scales weighed out on that?

(picture of balance scale) The word glory means weight. If you think of a balance scale you can put whatever you want on the one side but when God there is no comparing to the weight of God. If we put money on the scale, God’s glory is greater. If we put possessions on the scale. God actually owns it all, his glory is greater. If we put time on the scale, God is eternal. He outweighs. If we put convenience on

the scale the stuff we think will make life easier, the cross of Jesus that outweighs the sin, guilt and shame, the things that cause us pain, the cross is greater. If we put someone on the scale, God made that person and has zero faults. God is greater. God is full of glory because of who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.

On the basis of who God is and what he has done Romans 12:1-5 says, **Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Better together.**

There are patterns in our sinful world that are calling us to isolate from God and from one another sacrifice them instead of sacrificing ourselves. That is why Jesus said in Luke 14:27 <sup>27</sup> **And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.** John Tyson a pastor in NYC, said, of the 3 great things – faith, hope, and love. We can have faith alone, we can have hope alone, but we can't love alone. God's Word on 59 different occasions gives us directives to one another or each other. As in love one another, serve one another, and from Hebrews 10 passage encourage one another. **Better together**

The point is the for the church to be the church we need each other and we need to be mixed in with one another and have the truth of all of God's Word. Acts 2:42-47 says, **2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

Do you see the plurality but talking about being one? They, everyone, all, together, everything in common, anyone, meet together in the temple courts, added to their number. It doesn't say, **Acts 2:42-47 Some devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> A few were filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> A handful of the believers were together and had somethings in common. <sup>45</sup> Several sold property and possessions to give to a couple of people who had need. <sup>46</sup> Once in a while they met together in the temple courts. About fifty broke bread in their homes and ate alone with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of a couple of people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** It doesn't say that because we are better together.

Not only do we need each other we need all of God's Word, the apostles' teaching. We gather to demonstrate our love for God and our love for one another. We don't just show up to try to put in our time, to get out of it what's is for me, to get a brownie point. See we can despise God's Word not just by not gathering for worship but by gathering for worship but not paying attention. We have daydreamed in person and online. We have thought about cleaning up the house when we get home and we have

picked up things around the house while worship was playing on our phones, computers or TV. We have grilled out and washed dishes while multi-tasking home and calling it worship as well as we have thought about grilling out and doing the dishes when we get home. We get distracted so easy. We sometimes get so out of balance like when I was that basketball player as a junior in high school. We mess up are gathering by gather for worship, paying attention, but not doing what God tells us to do.

But even with our heads hanging low with sin, guilt, and shame, Jesus says in Isaiah 55:1 **“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.** Jesus invites the rich and the poor, male and female, confused, concerned, doubtful, the wounded heart, the chip on your shoulder, the angry, the wayward, the addicted, to those with misplaced priorities, every nation, tribe, language and people. Even those of who have worship other things, other people. The church isn’t for the perfect, it is for the imperfect. It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. God says to us all. Come on, let’s gather. Let’s meet together!

God is so patient, so kind, so loving. Jesus is the first ingredient of the church. He is the head of the church. Jesus went out to meet us first. Jesus didn’t wait for you or me to act a certain way or think a certain way or say a certain prayer. Jesus went first. Jesus gave himself for the doubters, skeptics, selfish, unbelievers, the think they are do good-ers, and the rest. Jesus took the time to pray in our place and he prayed for us. Jesus put God first even when it wasn’t convenient and even when it cost him his life. Jesus took up his cross which brought with it all of our sins and imperfections including our idolatries.

And by taking up his cross Jesus was found guilty so that you I might be declared innocent and be set free. Jesus gave his perfect all for all of our imperfect giving and Jesus gave it all for what we haven’t given. Jesus worship God perfectly in our place. Jesus went before so we could have an after. Jesus is calling you to be a part of his family gathering and so move from death to life, from dread to expectation, from fear to faith, from guilt to grace, from uncertainty to certainly, from sorrow to joy, from selfishness to one another-ing, from defeat to victory, from isolation to gathering, from wandering to the wonder and awe of worship!

And so for those gathering today in person or online, keep gathering. This is what God has in mind when he is talking about the Church being his body. For those worshiping in person or online, invite, phone, text, email, send a card, and encourage family and friends to join you in person or online because we are **better together.**