



Open Our Minds to the Scriptures

Ascension of the Lord

Luke 24:44–53

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

May 28, 2017

Thought for the Week

Scripture: Hebrews 10:23-25, Eph. 5:25-27

This week's "thought" has to do with a problem that is becoming increasingly worse and very alarming to those who love and cherish the Community of Christ, as well as many other churches and their God-given mission to the world. It's the lack of commitment among believers to gather together for worship, sharing, instruction, encouragement, accountability and joint-effort in carrying out the commission Christ gave to His Body to bring the gospel to those across the street and across the sea.

There is a very good reason the author of Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing..." That is, let us not give up meeting together as the gathered church, or the congregation of the faithful, for worship and celebration. (Yes, it was even a problem back then!) And the reason he called them to gather was not an effort to gain more of God's favor by doing so, but because of what such gathering does for us, and the other Christians, in terms of our spiritual health and the strengthening of the Church.

In Hebrews 10, verse 23 suggests it helps us, "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." Verse 24 suggests it's one of the ways we can, "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." And the rest of verse 25 suggests that our gatherings do the opposite of what being absent does -- it enables us to, "encourage one another, and all the more as we see the Day approaching."

Our presence on a Sunday morning encourages others. It gives us an opportunity to carry out our God-ordained ministry of serving, encouraging, and bearing the burdens of others.

If I view my gathering with others as I should (as a time to minister encouragement to others through my words, heart-felt worship, prayers, listening ears, and actions) I have the honor and privilege of being able to love others with brotherly affection, help to the struggling, listen to the lonely, assist the elderly, encourage the young, and share in people's growth as believers. So let me share the whole verse: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, **BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER, and all the more as we see the Day approaching.**"

A favorite hymn of many Christians was written in 1800 by Timothy Dwight, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord." You don't hear it any more. Yet, although the church members are sinners in the process of being sanctified, and thus there are and always will be problems (as in any human gathering of diverse souls), it's still the Bride Christ loves. The ones He chose to unite to Himself in holy union, the objects of His sacrificial joy and affection, and His chosen means to continue carrying out His work on earth.

That's why the words of this hymn resonate with me. Because when I am loving His church, I am loving those He loves, has redeemed, has laid down His life, and is preparing for an eternity in His presence (Eph. 5:25-27).

See if you are inspired by these words:

*"I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord. The House of Thine abode.
The Church our blest Redeemer saved, with His own precious blood.*

*I love Thy Church, O God! Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye, and graven on Thy hand.*

*For her my tears shall fall; For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end.*

*Beyond my highest joy, I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows, and hymns of love and praise."*

Let us pray for more members of the Community of Christ who felt the same way. It would be "self-love" of the best kind! Not because the Church is perfect (it may never be, at least in this age), but because in doing so, we love those Christ chose as His Bride. We are doing as He commanded when He said to His disciples: *"Love one another as I have love you."*



Ease your mind on God's peace

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7)

Because of the Holy Spirit, believers can have complete peace in the middle of a crisis even though it doesn't make sense to our natural minds. The Lord gives us this peace so that we don't have to fret through life always worrying about what is next. His peace gives us the confidence of having our prayers heard and answered according to His will.

Ease your mind on God's love

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

We can't even comprehend the incredible love that God has for each one of us. It was because of His love that Jesus came to the world, died on a cross, and rose again. We must never mistake the love of God to be like the love of people—which is fickle and often conditional. God's love prevails through every life situation.

Ease your mind on God's plan

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

It can be difficult to believe that there is a calculated plan for our lives when everything is in chaos. Yet the Lord knows our beginning and end—and He has planned it to the minute detail in order that we may live what He has destined for us. The amazing grace of God is the buffer of our lives that allows us to fulfill our destiny in Christ.