

SERMON: “Welcome Back: What We Should Do.”

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, September 19, 2021, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church

[Welcome back! Again, as I said last week:I am glad that you are there/with us today! Thank you for joining us wherever you/for being with us as come to know/worship God together. There are a lot of other places/things you could be/doing – but you’re/we’re here/together, doing something/better/more important/essential – we’re doing what we were created/called – even commanded – to do, and that is praising God – as we should... together, as a community of faith in faithful/obedient/love/worship/praise of God. So, welcome back! Let’s get started.]

Last week we heard how, steeped in the Judaic tradition, it was Jesus’ custom to ‘go to Church.’ And we learned; His going to synagogue wasn’t merely something He did – He was living out His obedience to God. But obedience wasn’t the only reason He went to Church. Jesus attended synagogue/Church because He wished to be in the presence of God – in the midst of the people of God – in a way that He couldn’t be on His own. So, the answer to the question “*What Would Jesus Do?*” was clear:He would go to Church to be in communion with both God/His neighbours. This week we’re asking ourselves a similar question: “*What Would You Do?*”

Paul – in our reading – addresses the issue of attending worship with the members of the early Church head on. He begins the chapter by telling his listeners/the members of the 1st Century Church how the sacrificial requirements of the Law were insufficient/old way of offering sacrifices to “protect” ourselves only served to roll back sin for a year. He then tells them/us the Good News that only Christ’s one-time sacrifice is sufficient in that it permanently removes our sins. But – and this is an important but – this ‘one-time’ action only serves to offer us salvation: we have to ensure that we live up to/are worthy of this grace.

[“Sufficiency”/“condition/quality of being adequate/enough/especially of something essential:Latin root= ”wealth”. Jesus’ death/blood – was sufficient/adequate/enough of what was essential – to pay/absolve our penalty/sin. BUT:only Jesus’ blood/not ours could do this. Also:sufficient=be self-sustaining/self-adequate/have all power and strength:Either Christ has all power/strength – is the One we need/depend on – can save us/or He doesn’t/isn’t/can’t. Sufficiency – all-or-nothing concept:we must decide/accept that Christ is our all in all or isn’t. Nothing we can do bring about our salvation – only Jesus can do that, and He desires our faith. In return:our faith must be sufficient/live lives like Christ....]

And this is what Paul tells us! Since we have faith in the “*sufficiency of Christ*,” we need to grow in that faith:it’s not enough to say/claim that you’re a Christian;being a Christian is an ongoing process/transformation into a being worthy of Christ’s sacrifice. And Paul makes it clear – just as Jesus did in His life – that participating in the gathering together as a community of believers to worship is part of this growth. This is why he urgently tells them/us that we shouldn’t neglect to go to/be the church. Unfortunately, many of us/our family/friends/members do – sadly having eternal consequences for them as individuals and us as a community of faith.

[LW:Paul’s warning about Church attendance/not new problem – it/reasons/excuses;old as the Church![More valid then!] The problem is/why it’s important:the call to gather/worship/be the Church/crucial not only to their spiritual survival/BUT also the spiritual health/life of the Church! And, yet, many people don’t make Church/Church-going a priority. Don’t talk about this often/but

should: missing worship is a hazardous habit. It can cost us everything/eternal lives – sold in exchange for a fleeting distraction. God knew this: why He set worship of Him as our first priority.] Each of the Gospels record the excuses/reasons people who wanted to follow Jesus gave for why they couldn't – friends, they sound like ours. And, while Jesus heard them, He tells them/us to choose/determine what their/our priorities are: He tells them/us, reminding them of what God commanded in our Exodus reading – that worship/Sunday IS an act of worship/part of our commitment to God/God wants us to put no other gods (things/distractions/commitments) before Him – that, if they do; they/we will perish. Repeatedly, Jesus warns those who would listen that the one thing God requires from us is our commitment to/for Him. Now, I know that this sounds like a lot when we're 'talking about worship' – but (1st Commandment!) that's where it starts! Going to/being the Church/worshipping God is something that each of us must make a decision about: will we choose to be faithful/commit/attend as our first/highest priority, or not?

Friends, I know that you are the ones who are here! – not trying to beat you up! But being here isn't enough – out of love/for God/neighbours: we must do more than just show up! "What can we do?" you ask. And, while there is so much we can do, I want ask you to do this simple thing first: pray. Pray for yourself/those you have/God's placed on/in your heart/St. Andrew's that God will move through each of us as we respond to His call/command/claim on our lives/hearts as we gather to worship as/go to/be the Church together – because that's what God wants us to do/it's what Jesus would do/did – it's what we should do! Amen.