

Sermon Series: Church Vision 2023

Sermon Title: Belong

Scripture reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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I read the story in the SCMP of a local Hong Kong artist.

The headline caught my attention.

"Finding God without the Church" and the subtitle:

"He stopped going to church but sees God's work wherever he goes."

That was enough to make me keep reading.

In the article the artist describes how he 'raised his hand' in a service to say that he believed in Jesus.

He says this, "my whole life changed. Suddenly, I had something to hold onto. The church played the role of father to me (because he father was absent), I felt guided and I became devoted to church life. I read the entire Bible in one summer. The church became my life. I went to church every Saturday and Sunday for 10 years."

(Then) he said, *"After I graduated, in 2002, I stopped going to church, but my life still felt like that of a*

religious person. The church taught me to know what I really want and love and to follow that."

Then he describes how instead of going to church...he often walked around the city, looking at things and writing in his notebook.

And he says, "I noticed the way the light fell, and it felt like inspiration from God, but it wasn't the same God I'd worshipped before; it gave me fulfillment."

What a sad and perplexing story....of a man who feels a stronger sense of God walking around the city writing down art ideas than he does in church... and finds fulfillment.....alone.

Is that what God wants for us?

Let's pray.

My task is simple today:

I want to encourage us to BELONG to the people in the church deeply. Oh, how we need one another.

Or I could say it like this:

I want us to see our need (and actually do something about it)...the need to grow in spiritual maturity through one another.

I want encourage us through really 3 one another passages.

There are 40 something passages in the New Testament that command us to do such things as:

Love one another,
pray for one another,
bear one another's burdens,
submitting to one another
endure one another.....and as we will see today...
teach and admonish one another
exhort one another...and...
stir up one another

Let's first take a look at one of the passages in Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:12-17

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you [guys] richly, teaching and admonishing one**

another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I. Teaching & Admonishing one another.

Now, we want the word to dwell in us richly and the "YOU" here in Colossians is plural not singular. This is emphasized even more by the "*one anothers*" in this passage. It is supposed to be a team effort.

The pathway to Beholding God runs through the body of Christ.

There are a few elements in this passage that I want us to see.

- 1. Teaching one another-** it means instruction. Christians are to be in relationships and environments where they are giving and receiving instruction in the word.
- 2. Admonishing one another-** it means to warn gently. It is used for example in [Acts 20:31](#) where Paul says, "*for 3 years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*"

Interestingly enough, this passage also tells us to sing with one another.

We need more singing.

This is why we need home groups and not just Bible study groups, cause we need to sing to and with each other more and homes work better at that than public areas.

This passage in Colossians is very similar to a passage in **Ephesians 5:19**, except that instead of saying, "Let the word of Christ dwell" it says, "Be filled with the Spirit" in Ephesians.

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Questions to ask ourselves!

So, am I in any of these relationships?

Am I being taught the word along with others in a small group?

Do I have any relationships that are close enough that people can admonish me?

Join a small group. Start a small group.

We are commanded to teach and admonish one another because **The pathway to Beholding God runs through the body of Christ.**

II. Exhorting one another.

We are not only to Behold God together by teaching and admonishing one another but we are to exhort one another.

Hebrews 3:12-13

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **13 But exhort one another** every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

This passage starts out with a warning! '*Take care*' literally means, 'Beware/Warning'.

This whole passage is warning against rebelling against God, falling into unbelief, hardness of heart, slipping into sin and turning away from God.

And guess what the fix is?

Exhort one another.

Exhortation means literally to call to one's side or to call someone near. This word is used: to urge someone, to comfort, to beg, to appeal etc.

How many times do you think God has rescued you through a brother or sister, who called you to their side and said, "How you doin?"

How many times has God sent someone to talk to you, encourage you, pray with you?

Oh, how God has blessed all of us through the body of Christ!

If you and I didn't have people in our lives that were encouraging us, urging us to walk in holiness, calling us near to them and saying, "keep the faith", where would we be? We would've slipped into even more sin. Sometimes (as Jude says) people have literally "snatched us from the fire."

Who do you need to call near to you?

Who do you need to meet with regularly?

Exhortation is a safeguard against sin and unbelief.

Our relationship with God needs others.

Our Beholding needs Belonging.

We are to teach each other, admonish one another, exhort one another and we are to.....

III. Stir up one another.

Hebrews 10:23-25

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Perseverance is empowered by the prodding of others. Standing firm happens through sharpening.

Application:

Some of you have a barrier that needs to come down. For some the barrier is receiving and for some it is giving.

Maybe it's because of deep pain.

Maybe it's because of something you've done or something someone else has done to you...and so you won't let people close to you.

You've built a wall.

Listen, we all have had pretty messed up lives.

We are all dysfunctional. We've all been hurt.

But we are not victims who have no victory.
We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

But you're never going to grow if you don't open up, let people love you and come near you and speak into your life.

You're only going to go so far on your own.

Real Beholding and real victory runs through the body.

Maybe it's your *pride* that keeps you on the fringe and prevents you from Belonging to others.

Maybe you're *selfish* and you don't want to give your time to people.

I don't want this to sound harsh but we need to stop using busyness as an excuse for not Belonging deeper to the body.

We all have 24 hours in a day and we do what we want to do.

Everyone is tired. Everyone is busy.

It takes time for everyone to go here and there.

You're *choosing* not to come to Thursday prayer.

You're *choosing* not to be in a Bible study.

You're *choosing* to come to our worship gathering.

You're *choosing* not to eat lunch with the body on Sundays.

But when God saved you and I, he put us in a family. We don't live life just unto ourselves and read our Bible on our own and love God.

We are in a body and God has designed us to know him more through one another.

We are to **Belong** to the body deeply.

So, I encourage you and exhort you to ask the Lord how you need to go deeper in your giving *and* receiving to the Body....so that you and others might **Behold God** more together and truly **Belong** to a local church.

Teach one another.

Admonish one another.

Exhort one another.

Stir up one another.

The pathway to Beholding God runs through the body of Christ.