

Life: A Hero's Story / Unit 2: The Rescued Life
4: Engaging God with Others / October 27, 2019

Key Texts: Matthew 18:20 James 4:8 Hebrews 10:25

Key Words: Jesus is with us when we worship together; We are Better Together; Focus on God; encourage one another

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Isn't that an awesome verse? We get the part of “two or three gathering in His name”, we call that “coming to church”. But we miss the second piece where Jesus says – **“there am I with them.”** When we gather together in His name, Jesus is with us. Something unique happens when we gather in Jesus name.

Do you believe it? I kind of doubt it – if you did believe it you wouldn't scrolling Facebook on your cell phone – texting your friend about lunch – catching up on the all the gossip on Twitter – If you believed it you wouldn't be worried about the service running to long making you stand in line at Cracker Barrel to get a table.

(with passion)

If we really believed this, we would be one excited group because we are meeting together with our best friend, Jesus!

It excites me! - I know it excites some of you and others, well, not so much. And why is that? It's all about **“the expectation of meeting together”** with brothers and sisters to celebrate the goodness of our Heavenly Father.

- What usually happens is we come **“expecting to be entertained”**. The catch phrase is, “I really enjoyed the service” -- when they play something kind of bluesy or peppy – man, that's when I really “ENJOY” the service. (Pause) Really, so it's all about the music for you?
- Maybe you come hoping to have one song played that you like – hoping no one is setting in “YOUR” seat. It's like the old Burger King Slogan you want to **“Have it your way”** - when the things you are expecting to happen doesn't happen - you end up like a pickle – you know, where you “sit in your seat – soak in your self-centeredness – and sour your attitude ” – if you do this you block off any true engagement with God and any true meaningful connection with anyone else. (Pause) Worship is about God, not what we like or want.
- Maybe you **“don't know why”** you came here this morning, but you are here. Maybe you feel as if your life is upside down because of - pressures with your job – financial struggles – marital problems – parenting issues – health problems. If you can relate, this is the place for you. You need to be around people who will love on you - pray for you - and with you. Be open and honest with God, tell Him how messed up your life is and ask Him for guidance and strength. Please try to push all those worries and cares aside and focus on the goodness of God.

- (BTW, there is an elder in our Prayer Room praying for the service and would love to pray with you or anyone else. Please make your way to the Prayer Room at any time during the service. The Prayer Room is located on your right as you came in.
- Others may have come this morning hoping to meet with several other Jesus followers to “**experience God**” – to praise God for the amazing grace He has given you.
- I don’t know what brought you here this morning, but I know what brought Gail and I to Cap City a couple of years ago. We were wounded and hurting – we knew we could find healing where people gather in Jesus name.

It was Christmas Day in 2016. It was a little intimidating for us – Cap City is a large church and I had concerns - will we be accepted, or will we be ignored since the church is so large.

You see, when Gail and I came we had scares from the wounds of gossip and betrayal. We knew healing would come if we would seek God and surround ourselves with His people. I remember I had a bit of a chip on my shoulder expecting to be ignored, but God quickly knocked that chip off when several of His people warmly introduced themselves – we made our way inside the worship center to have Doc greet us with his magnanimous personality and superb people skills.

Seriously, Gail and I came looking for healing from our Heavenly Father. When the service began, we could tell things had been carefully planned and orchestrated to draw our focus toward God and it did. Our expectation to engage with God and our surroundings enhanced our worship.

You see folks, it’s all about what you bring into worship. If you come to be entertained, then you will just be entertained - if you come expecting to “have it your way” then you miss out on engaging God and enjoying His people – if you come expecting to experience God - then you will.

Several years ago, Gail and I lived in Houston TX some very close friends of ours, Dick and Jenny Thompson, came to visit us. I knew Dick was a big fan of the LA Dodgers and they happen to be playing against the Houston Astros. So, I got tickets for the game. We went out to dinner before the game and Dick was so excited about the game, he left the restaurant without paying for their meal. He was doubly excited to find out that our tickets were four rows back from the first base line. During the Dodger warm up he was hanging over the railing getting autographs and shaking hands with the players. During the game Dick would cheer and high five the other Dodger fans around us. It didn’t matter that he didn’t know the other fans – they were all part of the Dodgers family. WOW! What an exciting day! A day I will never forget.

Now, imagine how I would have felt if I had made all those plans - got tickets to see the Dodgers play the Astros. Made dinner reservations at a popular restaurant near the Astro Dome. Arrive early at our seats on the first base line where he could get autographs and meet the players. And Dick just sat in his seat, never ask a player for his autograph - never

cheered – no high fives with other fans - just sat there and watched, never engaging with the game or the other fans. I would have been heart broken.

Do you think it might break our Heavenly Fathers heart when we just “gather” together expecting to be entertained or expect to “have things our way?” We need to realize our Heavenly Father desires to be with us so much that He made us a promise. James, the brother of Jesus records it in....

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

This verse in Greek can be translated singular or plural – Look at the plural translation **“You all near to God and he will come near to you all”** (Proof positive, God is a Kentuckian) It’s the same promise Jesus makes in Matthew 18:20 **“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”** When we come together to express our gratitude to our Heavenly Father, He promises He will join us. God doesn’t say “I might be there” or “If I feel like it, I’ll be there” or “If I don’t get a better offer, I’ll be there”. NO, He promises to be among us.

Great things can happen when we come together seeking God. How God will reveal Himself, I can’t explain. But I know the power of God is present when we come together in Jesus name. God’s power will convict us of our sin – heal the hurting – and grant acceptance for the lonely.

Have you heard the phrase, **“Inside every human being there is a God-shaped void that no other person can fill?”** That is true. But according to the writer of Genesis in chapter 2 verse 18 we find.

“God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone”.

For years, many of us have heard this quoted in the context of marriage, and rightly so. But I believe the implications go beyond an affirmation of the marriage relationship. At its core, this is a statement about the importance of God’s children connecting well with one another. It appears God creates inside man a kind of **“human-shaped void that God Himself will not fill”.**

No substitute will fill this need in you for human relationship. Not money. Not achievement. Not busyness. Not books. Not even God Himself. Many of us walk around with a false smile on our face making people think we are happy, but on the inside we are empty.

Most of us walk around with tiny computers in our pockets called “cell phones” that can connect us with people all over the globe. We should be more connected to other people than ever, right? Actually, loneliness is rising, and may overtake obesity as the epidemic threatening most Americans.

One in three **(33%) of 18–35-year-old feel cared for by those around them – only (32%) feel that someone believes in them.** We have more technology to connect to the world, but

we are a disconnected society. I don't want Cap City to succumb to these stats! I do not want 33% of you feeling like no one cares for you. Hearing these stats should stir each one of us to do a better job connecting with one another.

Folks, I realize there are 200 to 300 people in this room and I am not asking you to get to know each one of them, but what I am asking is for you to get to know 8 to 10 and intentionally grow that acquaintance into a close friendship to do life together. To make this happen, you need to get to know people - you need to meet together.

Hebrews 10: 25 we read... ***“not giving up meeting together”*** So many preachers use this to teach people they need to come to church on Sunday, and rightly so, to a point. The very core of this statement deals with “meeting together” not coming to a building on Sunday morning. The early church not only met together on Sunday, they also met together in people's homes during the week. Where they shared their food with one another and encouraged one another to keep their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our key passage this morning doesn't say, **“when two or three are gathered on Sunday morning”**. It says...

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

That means Sunday morning – Sunday night - Wednesday night – in schools – at work – at home – any place – any time – people come together in Jesus name He is present!

Our Life Groups are modeled after the early church – people are meeting together at different times and different places to learn more about Jesus and to encourage one another.

Life Group is a non-threatening informal setting where you build a relationship with 8 to 10 other Jesus-followers to share the joys and heartaches of life, together. Why, because we are **“Better Together”**.

When you meet together with your Life Group, expect to meet God. When you come to this building to worship with other Jesus-followers, expect to experience God. We have a purpose when we come together, and that purpose is to engage with God and with one another. I want to remind us again, the power of God is more prevalent when we meet together with other Jesus-followers.

I want to speak directly to a certain segment of people that are here today. I realize there are some of you that are not be ready to connect with other people just yet, for whatever reason - and that's okay. You need to be here with us – God wants you here with us.

But God doesn't want you to stay disconnected from His children. Pray to Him and ask Him to grant you the courage to bust out of your shell and connect with other Jesus-followers whether you're a Jesus-follower or not. You need to be engaging with people that will encourage you and accept you.

Over the past few weeks a path has been laid out for us to follow that will develop our passion to meet with our Heavenly Father. I want to direct your thoughts down that path once again.

We found in the first part of the series of, “The Rescued Life” that when we accept Jesus as our Savior we are born into God’s family and become a child of God. Since we are a part of His family our Heavenly Father desires what’s best for us.

In the second part of the series we found that God does not require us to follow the 613 Old Testament laws but reduced it into two commands. First, to love God and the second is just as important as the first. Love others.

In the third section of this series, we discovered how we can build a relationship with our Father in Heaven through prayer and Scripture reading.

BTW – have you downloaded the You Version App? How you doing with the 30 Day Challenge? Doc challenged us to use one minute to read the daily verse from You Version and meditate on it and take another minute to pray. I am on day 7.

Today, we looked at the benefits of Engaging God with Others

This path doesn’t stop here, no, it continues on until God takes us home. I believe there are Jesus followers who think path of God ends at the top of the baptistry stairs, but they are wrong, there is so much more of God to experience. You see, as we continue on this path, continually building a personal relationship with God and doing life together with His children - our spiritual life will become richer and more meaningful.

If you haven’t accepted Jesus as your Savior and you feel Him nudging, don’t turn Him away. Let Him in, it will be the best decision of your life. If you have questions about the decision to be a Jesus-followers. I’ll be down here in front come talk to me – If you would rather talk with Doc or one of our elders – please seek one of us out, we would love to talk with you.

I spoke today about us coming together to engage God with one another. Communion is a time when we come together as God’s children to remember His Son Jesus. His life – death – and resurrection. It should stir our hearts to think Jesus loves us so much He traded the glory of Heaven for a cross. He did this so you and I could experience true love and grace. When you go to the worship stations please pick up a piece of bread and a cup of juice and take it back to your seat and hold it – meditate on what God has done for you through His Son Jesus Christ. Then I’ll come back up here and instruct when to the emblems.