September 20, 2026 Do Not Neglect the Assembly Hebrews 10:19–25; Luke 12:29–32

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, as some are in the habit of doing…" Hebrews 10:25

"But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." Luke 12:31

We live in a time when gathering has become optional for many. Schedules are full. Screens are everywhere. Isolation feels easier than community. And yet God speaks a clear, urgent word to His people: **Do not neglect the assembly.** This is not a suggestion. This is not a preference. This is not a denominational tradition. This is a **command** rooted in the very heart of Christian faith.

Hebrews 10:24–25 tells us why gathering matters—why worship matters—why the assembly matters. Today, I want to lift three truths from this text that remind us why the people of God must gather with the people of God.

First, we gather to stir up love and good works. The writer says, *"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."* The word *stir up* means to provoke, to ignite, to awaken. You cannot stir up love from a distance. You cannot awaken good works in isolation. You cannot encourage the saints from the sidelines.

Love grows in community. Faith grows in fellowship. Obedience grows in the assembly.

When the church gathers: Hearts are warmed. Faith is strengthened. Courage is restored, and Purpose is renewed. You cannot get that from staying home. You cannot get that from watching a livestream. You cannot get that from spiritual independence. God designed the church to gather so that **love and good works** would be stirred up in us.

Second, we gather to resist the habit of separation. The text says, *"Not neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, as some are in the habit of doing."*

Neglect is a habit. Absence becomes a pattern. Distance becomes normal. Once the habit forms, the heart cools. The enemy loves isolation. He loves separation. He loves when believers drift away from the body.

A disconnected believer becomes discouraged, vulnerable, silent, and unproductive.

Neglecting the assembly is not just missing church—it is missing **strength**, **support**, **correction**, **encouragement**, and **accountability**. The writer of Hebrews says, "Don't let that habit form. Break it. Resist it. Fight it." Coming to church is an act of obedience. Showing up is a declaration: **"I refuse to drift. I choose community."**

Third, we gather to encourage one another as the day approaches. The text ends with urgency: *"Encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

The Day is the return of Christ. The Day is the fulfillment of God's kingdom. The Day is the moment when faith becomes sight. As that Day draws near, the church must gather **more**, not less. Why? Because the closer we get to Christ's return:

- The battles intensify. The temptations increase. The pressures grow
- The world grows darker. The faith of many grows cold

We gather because we need encouragement. We gather because we need reminders. We gather because we need each other. We gather because the Day is approaching. The assembly is preparation for eternity. The gathering is rehearsal for glory. The church meeting is training for the kingdom.

Back to Church Sunday is God saying: "Come back to the people who help you grow." God delights to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:29-32). "Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink… your Father knows you need them… seek His kingdom… for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

This is the heart of Back to Church Sunday: God is not reluctant. God is not hesitant. God is not stingy. God is not distant. God delights to give you the kingdom. God joyfully welcomes you back. God gladly restores you. God willingly strengthens you. God lovingly gathers you. You are not returning to a place of judgment— you are returning to a place of joy. You are not returning to a place of pressure— you are returning to a place of promise. You are not returning to a place of fear— you are returning to a place of kingdom delight.

Illustration: The Coal That Grew Cold. A pastor once visited a man who had stopped coming to church. They sat by the fireplace in silence. The pastor reached in with the tongs, pulled out a single glowing coal, and set it aside. Slowly, the coal dimmed. Then it cooled. Then it died. The pastor picked it up, placed it back in the fire, and immediately it began to glow again. The man said, "Pastor, I understand. I'll be in church on Sunday." A coal cannot stay hot by itself. A believer cannot stay strong on their own. A Christian cannot stay faithful in isolation. We need the fire of the assembly. We need the warmth of community and the strength of gathering.

So today, on Back to Church Sunday, hear the invitation of God: Come back to the house of hope. Come back to the place of strength. Come back to the fellowship of believers. Come back to God's presence. Because when the church gathers, God moves. When the church gathers, faith rises. When the church gathers, hearts are strengthened. When the church gathers, heaven touches earth. **Let us keep the momentum! Welcome back to the house of hope!**

Let us pray: Lord, thank You for the gift of the assembly. Thank You for the church, the body, the fellowship of believers. Stir up love in us. Awaken good works in us. Break every habit of separation. Strengthen our commitment to gather. Encourage us as the Day approaches. Make us faithful, united, and devoted to Your house. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.