

## YOU WANT ME TO SPEND MY SUNDAY DOING WHAT?

For many people, Sunday is the only full day we get off. It is the one day of the week to sleep in and lazily get our house chores done before we set off into another full week of work, and endless activities both for the kids and ourselves. So why on earth would we give up hours of that special day to go listen to someone talk about Jesus? If God is everywhere, couldn't we just as well spend our time singing praise while we put the laundry in, or mutter prayers while we read the paper? The answer is yes! You can worship God anywhere; you can worship God alone at the top of a mountain or in the midst of household chores. God hears our pleas and our praise no matter where we are or what we are doing. So the question remains: why would we give up a portion of our day off to come to church or youth group or Bible study when we can worship from the comfort of our own homes?

To take the question further, what makes church activity any different than other groups who eat up our time - because it isn't just meetings on Sunday morning, is it? There are meetings during the week and clubs at the church for kids and youth and families. We often find that these activities and the others in our lives meet at the same time. Sometimes we have something we really want to do, that we love to do, and it is scheduled during times that conflict with what is happening at our church and then we have to make a decision. We all want the best for ourselves, our families and our children. We want our children to be well rounded individuals and experience all that life has to offer. This is not to say that the other things in our lives are not important. Homework, work, sports, free time, family time - these are very important things to put in our lives so that we are well rounded individuals, but what I want to ask then is this: what is the focus of your life? As Christians, we of course want the focus to be life in Christ, and so we have to ask ourselves the questions: What are all the things that we do worth, if we don't have faith? If we don't know how much God loves us, how much God has done for us, then where does our passion come from to use the gifts given to us? As we face the choice between two activities, we must ask ourselves which one will have the eternal life-giving effects that we deeply desire for ourselves and our families? Where will you meet Christ?

In Hebrews 10:25, we are told, "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 you see the Day approaching." God wants us to continue to meet together because when we meet with one another, worship together, play and laugh with one another, we grow stronger as a congregational family. Hebrews is also telling us that it is not always easy to meet together: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing." Life gets in the way; people get tired of being the only ones to gather time after time. Programs come and go and we all make choices for our activities. Sometimes we may feel we don't have a choice. We don't come to the meeting time or place because we don't feel worthy or capable. We are sick in our souls and we feel that God's community would not welcome us. Remember, the meetings of Christians are made up of sinful people, people who do not always uphold the teachings of Christ but need to learn and be encouraged to follow God's Word. You might just be the person to teach them. Church is a place where sinners gather to be renewed by the forgiveness of Christ and energized by people who are all in the same boat. This renewal, re-energizing and support are why we are encouraged to meet together. There is power when we come together. Christ promises us that,

"where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." He promises to be in our midst and to hear us. This is a mighty promise and all we are asked to do is to gather.

In totalitarian governments such as communism, what is one of the first things to go? Most dictators will take away the ability for like-minded people to gather in groups. The same was true under Roman rule with the early church. It was forbidden for Christians to gather and they had to resort to secret symbols to identify themselves to one another. The desire in such governments to disband the meetings of groups whose beliefs do not match their own is evidence of the power found within such meetings. When we meet together, we are no longer standing on our own but we have the support of other Christians. We are united in the body of Christ and supported in our faith. I know that life is busy, that work, homework, sports and leisure all take time and everyone wants a piece of your life. I understand that we do not always choose the times and days in which sports teams and other groups meet and ultimately all of us will need to make the choice. I cannot tell you all the skills you will receive through sports and clubs; good things for sure - leadership training and sportsmanship, things that will help you greatly in your life. I can tell you though, that the meeting of Christians is different. Anytime we gather, it is a time to be supported, to rest our cares on Christ and on others, to be built up and learn how to deal with all the other things in life. It is a place to reinvigorate our passion for all the things we do with the gifts and talents God has given us. What you gain in church with God's people is eternal. You'll receive faith and salvation, things that will last for much longer than our small amount of time on this planet. There is power and promise in those meetings during the week and on Sunday morning. Will you give up meeting, as the majority of people have done, or will you know the promise personally and be fed to meet the rest of life's challenges?

If you have nowhere to gather with God's people, I invite you to come to Grace Lutheran and worship with us at 10:30 on Sunday mornings. Come and experience Christ in our midst, experience the meeting of God's people, and know what it is like to be.....

In His Grip,

Pastor Karen