

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/9/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Why do you go to church? There are many reasons why people attend church and for most people, it isn't just one. There are a variety of things that call to us on the weekend and invite us to make worship part of our Sunday mornings. Here are some of those reasons and you can consider which apply to you.

- A Sense of Obligation – Many people feel that they have to go to church to try to make things right with GOD. Their sense of guilt over things done leads them to try to get back in GOD's good favor. However, this feeling denies CHRIST's sacrifice on the cross that brings forgiveness to all who believe.
- Tradition – Very simply, some folks go because that's what they've always done going all the way back to their childhoods. Parents set an example for their children by attending church and bringing their sons and daughters to the services of GOD's house. This practice often creates a tradition that stays with them throughout their lives or that leads them back after wandering away.
- Gratitude – For those who know and claim GOD's gracious forgiveness and love, attending worship is an opportunity to show their appreciation and love in return. Worship is one of the ways they can say, "Thank you," to GOD for what they have received.
- Friendship – Seeing others who have become dear brings many to worship. They look forward to seeing friends who are also companions on this pilgrimage of faith and life. Cell phones may have provided an alternative and convenient method to keep in touch, but it is before and after worship that connections are renewed.
- Healing – When one feels "beat up" by the experiences of the previous week, worship can be looked upon as a place to hear the curative word of GOD. Being reminded of GOD's presence and love can provide the renewal needed to face the world again for another week.

There is one other reason for attending worship that I hope people recognize and look forward to. It is simply that GOD has something to offer to us. In worship, as we share our prayer and praise to GOD, we also hear and feel what it is GOD wishes to give to us. GOD knows what we will face in the days ahead and frequently we will find something in worship that speaks to those challenges and opportunities. When we come without expectation that GOD will provide us with something, we can easily miss these blessings. But if we come with anticipation and hope for GOD's provision, we may discover things that can move us in response to that which the week will bring. It may be the sermon, but it may just as likely be a piece of music, a prayer, or a reading from the scriptures that can fill us in ways that we had not expected. On the sermon note form that I ask confirmation students to better learn how to listen to a sermon, I ask, "What is your attitude before worship?" and "Why might you be feeling this way?" Our attitude when we come to worship can heavily influence what we might receive from GOD. When we attend the worship of GOD's house with eagerness and expectancy, we may find

ourselves blessed in unexpected but wonderful ways as GOD gives to us what GOD knows will equip us for the ministry to which GOD will bring us soon.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey