

Our Bible reading for today – **Hebrews 13:1-21**

“I’m going to church today because . . .”

Well, for one reason, because Christ’s return in a week closer than it was last Sunday. Whether you think that Christ’s coming is rapidly approaching or slowly approaching, depends on your interpretation of the prophecies in the Bible. But, I’m going to church today because Christ’s coming is approaching.

Dating and courtship in America is somewhat regular with at least some healthy predictable patterns. Boy meets girl. As they find each other attractive for whatever reason, he asks her out for a casual date. It goes well, so they see each other again. They enjoy being together so they begin spending a lot of time together. They find themselves either dating each other exclusively just because that’s what they want, or “*going steady*” as a deliberate decision. They make their exclusive relationship public by announcing an engagement. More and more they are yearning for time together because they’re in love. They get more and more anxious for their wedding day and their lifetime together.

“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.” (^{NIV} Hebrews 10:25) I’m going to church today because Christ’s coming is approaching. “**The Day**” in this verse is the day of the coming of Christ for us. As an old song “*What If It Were Today?*” by Leila M. Norris said: “*Signs of His coming multiply; morning light breaks in eastern sky.*

Watch, for the time is drawing nigh; what if it were today?”

Every true believer who is living in obedience to God loves the church. Unlike the dating couple I talked about who are blinded to each other’s imperfections by love (and in the ensuing years of marriage will get to know all the imperfections) we are aware of the church’s faults. But we love the church, love being together, enjoy worship together, working together, learning together, praying for each other – the church is our “forever family!” Again, unlike the dating couple, we’re living with the annoying imperfections now, but in eternity, when Jesus comes, we’ll be together in perfection for eternity. In this unsaved and antagonistic world the church is a haven of peace with brothers and sisters in Christ. The church is an environment of caring encouragement, a place for spiritual refreshment, a community of hope and mutual support.

As in most of the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews was addressing people who were under the pressure of persecution. In the context of opposition to their new-found faith they were in danger of thinking they’d get relief by staying away from gathering with the church. The writer of Hebrews wanted them to understand that their absence from fellowship with the church would be counterproductive to their growth, peace and well-being as a Christian.

As I understand the “*signs of the times*”, Christ’s coming may be very near. And if so, things may not get better, but will probably get worse in this world. If “**the Day**” is approaching, that is even greater reason to love being together with my church, as I yearn for the eternal Day, eternal life together with my “*forever family*”, and “*The marriage supper of the Lamb!*” Among other reasons, I’m going to church today because Christ’s coming is approaching!

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