*Heaven-Sent Promises in the Midst of Our Earth-bound Pain*

“Everybody hurts. Sometimes.” That is the truth of this sin-filled life. We are not alone, though. While grief may be a companion in this life, Christ is still the treasure of our hearts.

Huh?

I have often read these words from John 20:19 -- *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"* It never ceases to amaze me how quickly the disciples forgot. And yet, I can understand. Their fears, doubts, and grief caused them to lock themselves away. Jesus entered their chaotic world of fear, doubt, and grief and says, “Peace!”

I wonder if the disciples’ first reaction was “Huh? Really?” It seems like that was the last thing they needed to hear as if Jesus’ words were irrelevant or impractical.

In this lesson, we will seek to understand how locking ourselves up does not lock grief out, it isolates us. We will also explore why we need Christ and his Church to enter in our isolation, even when it may seem less than helpful at the moment and we ask: “Huh?”

**Focus Verse**

**Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.**

 **Romans 12:15**

**How God Uses Us and Others**

*Discuss:* A lot of people stop going to church, or never start going, because of a misunderstanding of what the Church is supposed to be.

**Read Ephesians 2:20-22.**

19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the LORD. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Trouble in a local congregation is nothing new. In fact, many of Paul’s epistles were written to address this subject of trouble and trial in the local church. Let’s see what help the Lord provides in his Word to help us better understand the purpose of the holy, Christian, Church in our times of suffering, grief, or pain. What are some specific words used to describe the Church in this section of Scripture?

What is the Church to be built upon, and what does this mean for the structure itself?

**Read Romans 12:9-21**

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul talks about how we are to reflect Christ. Sometimes, thoughtless comments and careless acts can be taken as reasons to ask “Huh?” These can also become reasons to separate from the Church.

 As we look at Romans 12, why do we need all the Church’s members, no matter how intolerant, broken, irritating, or unhelpful they might seem to us and others?

How can embracing our own broken selves serve us in our own healing and our worship of Christ?

Look at the following verses from Ephesians. How is Christ identified in each?

* **Ephesians 2:20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.
* **Ephesians 4:15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
* **Ephesians 5:23** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Why is it important for us to recall that Christ is the focal point and most important aspect of our congregational life?

What happens when Christ is not held as the center of worship, study, and service?

**REMAIN IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

1. **Allow others to help**
2. **It will be messy**
3. **The earlier, the better**

**Personal Reflection**

In what ways has the church been a safe haven for you in your time of grief?

In what ways have church members caused you to question their words or actions and ask “Huh?”

When you are challenged to question someone else’s words or actions (Ask: Huh?), what does our Lord desire that we do?