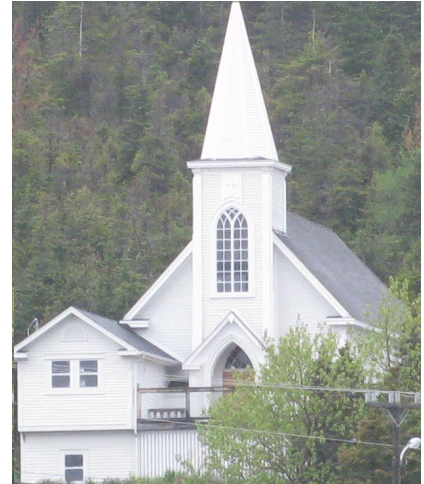


Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 18:15-20
Preparing for the promise
October 18, 2026



A fellow minister once commented 'if the call to worship that comes to mind every week is "Wherever 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, ..." we know we're in big trouble – that attendance just isn't what it should be.

I don't think Jesus was giving us a call to worship the day he spoke these words to those who were following him. He offered the words as a promise. He offered himself and his presence whenever there was a fellowship, a community, even a community as small as 2 or 3 people who believed in him.

Sometimes, we forget how important community and fellowship are. There's a story about a small boy whose mother was planning a short trip away from home. "But if you go," he said sadly, "Who will I show my homework to?" The wee guy could do his homework, but he needed someone he loved to share it with.

When two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, we are promised and assured that he will be with us.

Community, the Christian community – fellowship, Christian fellowship are so important, so powerful. Sadly, we often don't even realize this. Sadly, we often take it for granted. Sadly, we sometimes take it as our due and live as though this fellowship is something that others who aren't yet a part of it don't deserve as much as we do - after all, we've been here for years and have earned the right to the promise of Jesus to be with us always.

Today, I'd like to suggest that we think about this fellowship, this community of which we are a part.

First, let us consider rededicating ourselves to God and to the fellowship of His church - to be faithful, loyal and devoted members of the worshipping community. Consider this. Sometimes, we feel that we don't need the fellowship of the church family right now - and perhaps we don't. But someone else, in the pew beside us or in front of us or across the aisle, might be needing fellowship with us. Someone else may well be counting on seeing us in church the very morning we don't feel the need to be here. That someone may not even need to speak with us - they just need to see us and know that we are here.

Secondly, let us consider that Jesus said that his will would be worked out through the fellowship of his church. If the fellowship isn't strong, we need to know that some part of the Lord's will is not being accomplished. Sometimes, we let ourselves off the hook by saying that we're just a small church and what difference will it make if we don't worry too much about what we do. Sometimes we let ourselves off the hook by saying that we are just one person within that church and that no one will miss us and nothing much will be different if we aren't there. It was John Calvin who talked about how Christians must be different. He writes in his Behaviour in the Church, "When the church is called the house of the living God, it ought to awaken us to walk otherwise than we do. Why do we sleep in our sins? Why do we run into wickedness? Why do we think that God does not see us? that we are far out of His sight, and from the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? Let us remember what our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Wherever 2 or 3 are gather together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'"

Thirdly, let's consider a re-commitment to our children, our grandchildren, the young people in our communities. We owe it to them to train them in the Christian faith and to help them know that they belong to a wonderful fellowship, a community that prays for them and cares for them. We owe it to them to help them know that they are loved by the fellowship of believers. We owe it to them to teach them to love the fellowship - so that they will know where to turn - so that they will always feel supported, always know that they have companions with them on their adventures and journey through life. To know that they are not alone, is a wonderful gift for any young person, to know in every fibre of one's being that Jesus has promised his presence, and his presence is ours, no matter what.

Fourthly, and finally, for this sermon, let's consider a renewed, passionate commitment to those who are without the fellowship of the church. God calls us to extend his kingdom. To me this means to care about the life and salvation of those around me so much that I want them to become part of the fellowship of believers - for their sake, so that we can care for them, support them, pray for and with them, walk with them. It is not only our children and our loved ones who sometimes feel alone and vulnerable. There are countless others. In fact, for nearly six decades now, sociologists and psychologists tell us that feelings of loneliness and meaninglessness are at epidemic proportions in our western society. Jesus said, "Wherever 2 or 3 come together in my name ..." - be it at the coffee shop or on the hockey/ringette rink, or within the walls of the physical church, - "there I am in the midst of them."

We have likely all heard the saying, "There's a light at the end of the tunnel; Lord, I hope it isn't a train." The world is filled with uneasiness and foreboding these days, filled with a whole spectrum of fears -- from terrorism to flu pandemics to hurricanes and floods, to scams and hackers, to AI and wars. Add to this the fact that life changes around us at a pace that is dizzying. Voices of doom, despair and uncertainty can and often dominate even casual conversations.

The Christian fellowship/community has what needs to be spoken to this present day - if we would. We know the Light that shines in this world's darkness. We have the promise of the Lord's presence. Let us resolve, today and going forward, to speak the promise that matters, that can make all the difference in the world. And let us back up our words by showing one another and those around us what it is to belong to a fellowship that prays for, cares about, and honours, respects and cherishes one another; a fellowship that knows the Lord of all creation, that knows and worships the God of promise and hope and salvation.